

2006 2007

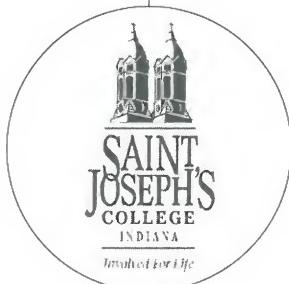
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saint joseph's college

measure



measure 2006 2007 edition

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2006 2007
dedication

This issue of *Measure* is dedicated to Eileen Crowley Kerlin, whom we lost at the end of 2006. Eileen was a member of the Saint Joseph's College class of 1980 and the wife of Charles Kerlin, long-time chair of the English department.

Eileen had always been a participant in and supporter of the arts. In addition to being a creative writer when she was a student on campus, Eileen helped to paint the mural that circles the ballroom in Halleck Center. If you knew Eileen, you might even be able to spot her in that mural, as she appears as one of the figures there.

Eileen continued writing and creating visual art after she graduated from Saint Joseph's College, even as she taught English at the Rensselaer Middle School and raised two children, Scott and Haley. To support the arts in her adopted hometown, she became a member of both the Prairie Arts Council and the Prairie Writers Guild.

This edition of *Measure* contains samples of Eileen's art. The cover images are taken from her fused glass, the visual medium in which she was working most recently. The magazine also contains three pieces of her recent writing. We think these images and this writing will give you a good sense of Eileen's vitality and her sense of humor. She was a warm and charismatic person whose vision and voice, thankfully, are not wholly lost to us, due to this work.

From this work, we also think that you will get the sense that Eileen lived her life as a work of art. Those of us who have been deeply touched by Eileen know that to be true. She made friends wherever she went; she engaged people and ideas; she laughed loudly and long. We count ourselves lucky to have been among her friends, and will hold dear what she taught us about art and about life and about the transcendence that often results from the confluence of the two.

Maia Kingman,
Faculty Advisor to *Measure*,
on behalf of the *Measure* Editorial Board



Eileen Crowley Kerlin
1957-2006

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Putting the Pool Away

Eileen Kerlin

It was almost the middle of October and we hadn't winterized our pool yet. Leaves were blowing, the weather had been nippy and the continuing rain threatened an overflow. We bought the pool last spring, and as first time pool owners, we made the classic mistake of thinking we had a few more weeks of pool time left and then neglected it because of the miserable weather. So it had sat for the last two weeks patiently waiting for some attention, quietly turning a miserable shade of murky green. But it was a warm, sunny fall day and I took the day off to get the winterizing done.

Doris, the lady at the pool store, had patiently guided me through pH balances, alkalinity and saturation indexes all summer. Now she had to walk me though algae control, sanitizing, shocking and oxidizing. Doris writes everything down then color codes each step in the process with highlight markers. At first this practice made me feel like Doris thought I was feeble minded. Later in the summer, she gave me gold stars on my perfect weather analysis sheets three weeks in a row. I proudly posted them on the refrigerator with a magnet for my family to see.

No gold star this time. Just a frown as Doris outlined several steps I had to make in order to turn the green shade to blue and make up for lost time. With \$175 spent I was ready to tackle the closing of the pool.

Step one – highlighted in yellow:

1. Scrub and vacuum the pool.

I had a special brush to clean the sides that I bought at Doris's shop in the summer. It fit on my hand like an extra large square glove. I didn't want to climb into the slimy mess so I was working from the outside. The pool is 5 feet tall and I am 5'2". Wiping the side of the liner as far as I could reach, which was a little less than half way down, I inched my way around the pool. My arms were getting tired, my back ached and I was beginning to perspire. I decided the pool was sufficiently scrubbed.

I connected the vacuum hose remembering what my husband, Charley, had said about making sure that the "arrow on the flow keeper pointed toward the skimmer." He had been the one to vacuum while I managed the chemicals. I'd watched him do it several times and was confident it didn't require an IQ over 65. With valve cup in place I got the air out of the hose, flicked on the pump, waited for the "Shhuuuuuucckking" sound and for the hose to bounce around showing me that the vacuum was working. Nothing. Just the familiar pump whirr. Okay. I must have connected something wrong or maybe I didn't get all the air out of the line. I checked it all again, connecting and reconnecting hose to vacuum to filter. Still no shucking sound.

In my head I heard my husband's voice saying, "Maybe you should read the instructions. Why do you think they include them?" I was glad his bossy self wasn't here with me. This would probably have been the start of an uncomfortable afternoon fixing something around the house together. Type A personality Charley always had to be in charge and I was always subjugated to peon as he barked orders. "Hold this. Go get the hammer. Shine the flashlight so I can see." Fixing something together usually evolved into a shouting match of some kind with me stomping off, saying, "You're an ass. Do it yourself."

I reluctantly went inside and got the instruction book. Yes, I was following the procedure, as far as

I could tell. So why wasn't this working? The phone rang. It was Charley. I told him what I was doing and how I had laughed to myself about what he would say if we were doing this together.

He said, "I'm not that bad. Now, what you need to do is..." I half-heartedly listened as he condescendingly walked me through each step I had already done. He did have a good comment on backwashing the filter before trying again, but when he said "Get the book out and look or just wait until I get home," I quickly said "Don't worry about it" and hung up. Does he think I can't do this without him? What an ass, I thought.

I went out and faced the dark water and miles of rubber tubing again. I backwashed, reconnected things according to the Vacuum Line Installation Diagram, flicked on the filter and finally heard that comforting shucking sound. I checked the pressure gauge on the filter and indeed it was registering 10. But then it read 15, then 20, then 25. This wasn't supposed to be happening. I remembered Charley saying "It should stay at around the 10 mark. If it goes down you're losing pressure. If it goes up you have too much pressure." I also remember commenting smartly "Really?!"

The pressure continued to go up until the flow keeper valve popped off and the hose snaked around the pool while water spurted through the skimmer. I turned off the filter. I was sweating more now. It was getting hot out. I got the long pole skimmer and finally fished the valve out. I was stumped. I was almost ready to admit defeat and actually wait until Charley came home. No. I decided to go inside, cool off and read the manual again.

Our son Scott is 21 and very knowledgeable about all things. He came home from work for lunch. He looked at the pool, turned to me and said, "It's green. It looks bad. Really bad."

"I know!" I shouted. "I'm working on it. Do you want to help?"

"Can't. Gotta get back to work. Good luck."

"Thanks," I said. What an ass, I thought.

I went back outside. I had four color coded steps on my list from Doris and I hadn't yet done step yellow number one. I tried again; backwashing, connecting hoses, getting the air out, switching on the pump and... at last a shucking sound. However, the pressure gauge still showed a steady rise. This time I held on tightly to the flow keeper valve to keep it from popping off. The hose was bumping and sucking like it was supposed to do. I was feeling confident that I was making some progress. Then the vacuum itself on the other end of the hose in the water popped off. The hose snaked up and around and water snarled in the skimmer. I turned off the pump, grabbed the long pole skimmer and coaxed the vacuum to the top. I refitted vacuum to hose to filter, backwashed, released air and flicked the pump on again. No shucking sound, just noise. I went inside to call Charley.

No, I wasn't going to call him. For God's sake I could do this! It was 1:30 in the afternoon. I repeated the same process until 2:45 when I slammed the stupid vacuum down on the ground, took apart the stupid hoses and threw the flow keeper valve at the dog. It didn't hit her. She just looked at me and slowly walked under a nearby tree and lay down.

4:35 and Charley came home. I had been inside drinking pinot grigio for awhile now.

"The water still looks green," he declared. "Didn't get it, huh?"

I didn't say anything, but gave him my "don't even go there" look and poured myself another glass of wine.

"Okay, let's see what you're doing wrong."

Five minutes later.

"Honey" he called from the pool deck. "You didn't have the arrow on the flow keeper pointed toward the skimmer. It's working fine now. Honey?"

I don't remember what happened next. I might have calmly gone out to the deck and said, "Thanks Charley. You're so smart." Or I might have gone upstairs, slammed the bathroom door and taken a cold shower. Wine in the afternoon is never a good idea. I do recall coming downstairs later, handing Charley the list from Doris and saying, "I think you should handle things from here. I'm going to bed."

The Armadillo Lizard

Dr. Bob Brodman

(*Cordylus cataphractus*) from the Namaqualand region of South Africa, June 13, 1005 (35mm Photography)





Kairos 45

Judy Kanne

Young people gathered together
To find comfort, themselves, and support
 for faith lost,
 for faith strengthened,
 for faith renewed.

On their own,
 in a small group,
 with all of the retreatants,

They are thinking, hearing stories,
 reflecting upon feelings,
 absorbing their reactions to the tales told,

Through contemplation,
 petitions, warmth from others,
 thoughts, prayers, good spirits;

And sharing: exposing their hearts, their goals,
 their worries, their loves, their transgressions,
 their life graphs, their life learnings, their concerns,
 their disappointments, their obstacles,
 their celebrations, their adjustments, and

Listening to one another,
Listening to one another,
Listening to one another
In their journey of faith.

Ballet

Ami Tuft

Dance with me awhile
When we have the floor.
Lead me and teach my feet to fly.
School is like a ballet, appearing easy,
But makes your feet sore
When you first step in.
Stretch the muscles of your mind to gain
The strength to leap with grace
Into the person, that once learns the moves,
Will never lose the rhythm.

Learning to Swim

Mark Seely

Copernicus and Galileo were mischievous
schoolboys dropping live toads
down their buxom teacher's blouse.
The Western World chuckled: "boys will be boys."

Darwin reached in with his bare hands
and pulled out wads of tissue
while the hollow-chested fake
ran red-faced from the schoolhouse.
The Western World put its hand to its mouth in astonishment.

Science has done very little since—
school is only in session on Sundays,
and modern science is little more than
commercial advertisement.

"The Western World is in a meeting right now,
try calling back next Thursday."

So we hang crystal prisms on our rearview mirrors.

But there will be no rainbows
after the polar icecaps melt—
global warming being what it is:
a godless act of self-mutilation.

In Pursuit of Prey

Jessica O'Neal

Digital (EOS Canon Digital Rebel SLR w/ Tamron 28-105 lens)



You Don't Let Your Mother Hurt Your Friends

Christine Schmelter

“Mommy’s home! Mommy’s home!” seven-year-old Mezmorin screamed out as he ran to the front door of the small house. Cade laughed hysterically as he got off of his chair and he followed his young son to greet his wife Silva.

Silva came through the door, laughing as Mezmorin jumped onto her. Cade held onto both of them as he kissed Silva and the top of Mezmorin’s head.

“How was work?” he asked her as Mezmorin finally detached himself from her body and he bounded off into the kitchen. Silva let out a groan as she let her purse and keys fall down onto the top of a small table. She fixed the pencil that was twisted into her long blond hair, keeping it away from her face and up off of her shoulders. She was wearing a black hooded sweatshirt that advertised the tattoo shop that she was a manager at.

“It was bad. Margaret was up my butt all night! She keeps threatening to leave the shop because she can’t stand the people that we cater to but she has yet to leave!” she exclaimed.

Cade just laughed. “It’s because she thinks you’re hot!”

Silva rolled her eyes, but then she stopped and she shuddered, that was thought that she really didn’t want to have. “You’re probably right, that’s probably why she always schedules me with horrible hours and screws me over for all of Mezmorin’s stuff. Oh well, there’s nothing I can do until she leaves. All right, come on Mez, it’s time for bed!” Mezmorin ran out from the kitchen, tightly hugging Cade’s legs before he grabbed Silva’s hand and started to pull her up the stairs. Silva laughed as she let herself be dragged up the stairs.

They both went into Mezmorin’s bedroom and he hopped onto his bed, but he stopped and stared at Silva with huge and terrified eyes. “No, no, I’m not going to bed! I’m not going to be boogeyman food!” Mezmorin declared, punching his fists onto his bed.

Silva shot him a look as she stared intently at him. “What do you mean boogeyman food?” she asked.

“Dad said that the boogeyman gets every little kid when they go to sleep! He sneaks in through their closet and he creeps up on them while they’re sleeping!” he cried out.

Silva winced; she knew exactly where this was going, but she had to know exactly what her husband had done and said to traumatize their son. “Does he pop out and yell surprise?” she asked hopefully.

Mezmorin frantically shook his head. “He jumps onto the bed and he digs his claws into your belly and rips out your insides!” he declared with a frightened glee.

Silva felt her anger begin to boil and fester. She was going to kill her husband. “Now explain to me how you and your father come onto this topic?” she demanded through clenched teeth.

Mezmorin carefully eyed his mother; his stormy gray eyes growing wide as he saw the anger that was engulfing her brown ones. “We were watching Boogeyman and he said that it was a ‘bunch of bullshit, that’s not how the boogeyman really works’ and then he told me all that!” He scrunched up his forehead as he

thought for a second. "What's bullshit?"

Silva had finally had enough. She got up off of the bed and she stomped over to the doorway. "Cade!" she bellowed. "Cade honey, could you please come upstairs... NOW!" She walked back to the bed, flopping down on it, playing with the bottom of her sweatshirt. Mezmorin peered up at her, a look of concern imprinted on his tiny face.

"Mom, are you going to kill dad?" he asked her.

Silva laughed; the thought had crossed her mind. "No, I'm not going to kill him; I'm just going to hurt him really badly!" Mezmorin stopped himself from asking what the difference was; he didn't want her mad at him too.

"What's up baby?" Cade asked in a smooth and slick voice as he hurried into the room. Silva glared hotly at him and Mezmorin wished that the boogeyman would come and get him so he wouldn't have to be in the middle of them fighting.

"Cade, you mind telling me why you let our eight-year-old son watch *Boogeyman* and why you proceeded to tell him how the movie lied about what the boogeyman is really like?" she demanded angrily.

Cade looked around the room as if he had no idea what was going on. Realization set in and he looked at Mezmorin with a look of betrayal; he knew that he should have sworn the kid to secrecy. He looked over at Silva, watching the anger come off her in waves. She was ready to kill him and if he didn't think fast, she probably would.

"Now wait a minute woman! Who's the one who sings "Counting Bodies like Sheep" to him as a lullaby? Oh and who's the one who reads Stephen King to him for a bedtime story? I seem to remember you reading him that one boogeyman story that scared the crap out of you both!" Cade cried out in his own defense.

Silva stared at him in shock. She couldn't believe that he had remembered that. "But I didn't tell him that the boogeyman was going to rip out his innards!" she argued, trying to keep her tone neutral, keep him from realizing that he had won.

Cade raised an eyebrow. "There you go making up stories again, but I seem to remember you reading him a story about a body burning—"

Silva let out an angry cry as she stood up, cutting off the rest of Cade's words. Mezmorin and Cade looked over at her and they could see the rage and embarrassment go through her entire body. Mezmorin looked at his mother in awe, thoughts of the boogeyman long gone.

"There's no way that you remember that," she said in a small voice as she stared down at her feet, the faintest ghost of a smile creeping to her lips.

Cade grinned. "Yeah, I'll show you what I remember!" he stated as he rushed at her, picking her up in one fluid motion. Silva let out a squeal of delight as Cade kissed her. "Good night bud, sweet dreams!" Cade said as he carried her out of the room, shutting off the light and shutting the door behind them.

"Night baby," Silva's voice came through the door accompanied by her giggles. Mezmorin smiled and giggled himself; he liked his parents best when they were like that. He snuggled down into his bed, smile

still imprinted on his lips as he rested his head on his pillow, breathing in the flowery perfumes that his mom always sprayed over the bedding. He lay there, smelling the perfumes, feeling at peace, but slowly, thoughts of

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of the boogeyman slowly began to creep into his head. He frowned, clenching his eyes shut, imagining a hulking and hairy creature in his closet. A small rustling noise quickly jerked him up into a sitting position. Mezmorin's eyes grew huge and wide as the rustling noises got louder, closer. The moonlight that was filtered in through his window and hit the slanted closet doors began to flicker and distort as if something was moving around in the beam shafts.

There was a loud bang and the doors were thrown open, revealing a huge furry figure. Its eyes were veiled by dark fur, but Mezmorin could still see the red irises staring at him as claws the size of butcher knives floated in the air. The creature let out a growl, coming inches from where Mezmorin lay. Mezmorin took one look at the massive monster and he smiled, extending his teddy bear up to him.

"You wanna play?" he asked.

The creature froze for a minute, all purpose leaking from its brain as it stared down at the child and the extended teddy bear. It was there to scare the life out of the child, leaving only a body behind. It did it every night, popped out, scared a kid to death. It had never had a kid ask it to play; it had no idea what to do, so it just did the first thing that popped into its head. It took the bear and plopped down next to the kid. Mezmorin looked over at the creature. "You're not scary like you were in the movie and in the stories," he said.

The creature frowned. "I'm not? Why not?" it asked in a gravely and demonic sounding voice.

"My mom's scarier," Mezmorin told him.

The creature thought about this for a second. He remembered seeing the boy's mom a couple of times when he had just stayed in the closet, hoping that the boy would find him there. "Yeah, she is scarier," it said, not feeling totally worthless.

"What's your name? My name's Mezmorin!"

The creature thought for a second; no one had ever asked his name before. "Just call me Boogey."

Mezmorin took Boogey's massive hand into his tiny one. "Nice to meet you Boogey!"

Boogey let out a laugh, a laugh that sounded as if it had come from the bowels of hell. "You know what; you're a pretty cool kid! I don't think I'm going to kill you! But I do need to kill someone tonight, it's my job," Boogey said in a saddened voice.

Mezmorin nodded his head in sympathy. "Mom says that jobs are always filled with junk you don't wanna do," he said.

"Do you have any ideas? I really need to up my numbers," Boogey said.

Mezmorin thought long and hard. There wasn't anyone that he personally wanted dead, but he knew that there were a lot of people that his parents wanted dead; they hated a lot of people. "Well, there are two people that my mom and dad always talk about and they say a lot of bad words when they talk about them and some words that I think are made up," Mezmorin said.

Boogey grinned. "You mean your mom's boss Margaret and your dad's boss Bob?" he asked hopefully. Mezmorin nodded his head. "Great! I know exactly where to find them! Follow me!" Boogey exclaimed as he took Mezmorin's arm, pulling him into the closet.

Marge yawned hugely as she lay on the rumpled bed. Bob sat on the far end of the bed, lighting up a cigarette, shoving his considerable girth back into his black work pants.

"Where are you going?" Marge demanded in a deep and threatening tone.

"Someone has to watch my store, Marge. I'm supposed to be there," he snapped.

"It's eleven o'clock at night, Bob; the store is closed," she hissed at him. Bob glared at her; why did he ever think that she was attractive? "Fine, then, I'm going home, away from you!" he declared.

Marge sat up, grabbing a hold of the orthopedic shoe that was on her nightstand, ready to throw it at her temporary lover, but she froze, letting a frightened squawk fly out of her mouth.

"What? What is it?" Bob asked in a scared tone.

The sound of giggling and rustling filled the room, coming from the huge closet doors that were right behind Bob's massive frame. The doors began to tremble and shake and then they were ripped open. Bob screamed, sounding like a terrified Girl Scout as a furry and massive creature popped out of the closet. Bob tried to run for the bed, but the creature tackled him to the ground, slamming his head on the ground. Bob let out another womanly shriek and then claws and teeth were slamming and ramming their way throughout his entire body. He let out a gurgled scream as blood gushed out of his slack mouth and onto the floor. His face fell into the carpet, reminding Marge of a beached whale.

The creature jumped off of Bob, his claws and teeth dripping with blood and gore and it turned its beady red eyes onto Marge. She let out a scream as it pounced on her, its massive bulk pinning her down onto the bed, trapping her from fighting as it ripped her to shreds.

"Can we go now?" Mezmorin asked from the closet, his hands clamped tightly over his eyes.

Boogey looked down at the mess that he had made and he felt immediately better. "Yeah, I'm tired too," he said. Mezmorin laughed as he took Boogey's bloody and gory hand in his own, leading them both to his own closet.

"You have to get cleaned up before you get into my bed; Mom doesn't like it when I get the sheets really messy," Mezmorin said.

Boogey nodded. "I don't like messy sheets either."

Silva hummed to herself as she sauntered out of the bedroom, a grin permanently plastered on her face. Shivers of pleasure ran down her entire body as she thought about all the things that she and Cade had done that night.

"Lay your head down, child; I won't let the boogeyman come; counting bodies like sheep to the rhythm of the war drums," she sang as she carefully opened Mezmorin's door. She opened her mouth to call out "good morning" but she stopped suddenly; something wasn't right with the bed. Lying next to Mezmorin was a furry figure, something much bigger than the family dog.

"Get out of that bed! Get away from my baby!" Silva screamed out wildly as she ran up to the figure, slamming her fists into the massive body. Mezmorin jumped up and he stared at his mother with wide eyes. "Mom, stop! You're hurting my friend!"

Quarter-Life Crisis

Amber Slagal

You never can understand the gravity of change
until you accept the fact that time,
in all of its eternity,
does not move as slow as you once thought.

Children begin to move quicker in front of you.

You grasp at yesterday morning
when you had time to balance the checkbook
but enjoyed a poppy seed bagel instead.
Age does not bear luxury well for common folk.

Muscles ache.

Knees ache.

Head ache.

Ache is a wonderful verb you can't seem to get enough of.

Screw pain being the indicator for the persistence of our lives.
When jury duty announcements
and IRS audits quit berating the mailbox,
I'll know I'm dead.

Four, Not Five.

Amber Mathia

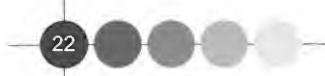
Shuffling our feet up the steps.
Halting, stalling, choking, trying not to breathe
If we could stop breathing we could stop time.
And reality would not be seeping out behind the glass doors.
We gripped each other with tight palms and squeezed our eyes shut,
All making the same wish, all pleading with God.

The next time we would be together we would know.
She would be gone forever.

But we would still wait for her to arrive at the Barnes and Noble on Grape Road.
We would listen for her to order a plate of maraschino cherries and pineapple at Steak 'n Shake.
Someone would accidentally slip out her name, Kavya.

We would halt. Stall. Choke.

Grip onto each other again as the image of our friend, laying in a casket after her Hindu funeral ceremony,
Bananas and garland around her face, would flash behind all of our tear stained eyes.
And it would start again, the brightest flame we'd ever known would seem to burn out again without a sound,
leaving us to continuously readjust to the darkness.



Untitled

Jessica Lamping

Highlighters fall from the sky
Followed by folders and notebooks
An empty blue backpack floats down next
Pens and textbooks rain down
And land next to a broken window screen
A red baseball jersey and green shirt soar
And more shirts and jeans follow
A named hoodie is the last to descend

Smiling, I step back from the scene

She's breaking up with him again
Standing in the window, screaming
He runs from the building, unclothed,
And rushes to gather belongings

You'd think by now he'd learn to stop leaving things in her room

This has been a biweekly ritual for the dorm closest to the field
Most people are accustomed and ignore it
I chuckle and continue to class

Moving on from Addiction

Melissa Klahn

If I could forget the day you told me you had an addiction, I would
If you could do the same for my addiction, could we just forgive and forget?
Or is that now an impossibility for both of us to one day regret?
I lie to myself sometimes that everything seems to be going fine.
The scars on my arms have faded now
And your new liver is keeping you alive.
I feel thankful for the progress,
But in the end we are both still addicts.
Even if we no longer give into forbidden objects,
Like vodka and razor blades.
We will always be considered addicts you and I
But someday maybe that will only be in the back of our minds
I used to pray to be normal and to have you back
And now I find myself praying to whoever is listening
To have my old life back
The one where I was blissfully ignorant.
That of course will never happen,
But don't worry mom.
Someday soon I hope,
Everything for me will be considered right



The Casualty of Sex

Teresa Helena Moreno

The causalities of sex take many forms,
And to many bodies their pleasures conform.
Sometimes consented, but often not
It leaves the ramification of tying one up in a knot.

Sheets made of cotton spring aren't exempt from this thing,
For in bleeding plaids, blue and green, he laid me down without a ring.
My tongue could not conform to his French, yet still on top of me he clenched,
And in that moment our bodies conspired, as we set forth the aching desire.
Nothing more can be said for it didn't last, and I gave the façade it was in the past.
However in that moment I embraced his bliss, and his unrequited arms I still missed.

The causality of sex unraveled the ribbons in my hair
And I let it fall down, leaving me stripped bare.

A blanket of feathers is where the other one left me tethered,
And he pushed and prodded till he forced my mind and body severed.
Beady eyes, counting all of them — four,
Glared mockingly from the blonde hard wooden floor.
And where was God then, why didn't he hover
As he tried to hide his disgrace with a creamy slip cover?
My writhing thighs spread out like branches of trees,
He continuously kept on kissing above the knees.
Gloating, he pushed as he held onto my hips,
He thrust himself down stealing more than my lips.

The causality of sex wraps ribbons around my head
Choking me leaving me dispensable in his bed.

Though I gave myself uncommitted once before,
Doesn't mean I should be taken and treated like a whore.
Now I continuously wonder what he has done
And fully comprehend the sentiment of "Me and a Gun."
For many women are victims in this causality of war,
That's not what was intended, what we were made for.

And if you ask a woman to merely kiss that day good-bye
She'll reply: "I don't even know how, I would almost rather die... .

For the causality of sex keeps me sick and overfed,
And leaves me tethered to many lissome beds.



Taking Off A Psychologist's Clothes in Bangkok

Parody of Billy Collins' "Taking off Emily Dickinson's Clothes"

Daniel Waclaw

First, her sleek sweater, cashmere from K-Mart,
easily deposited on her bamboo ottoman.

And her headband,
slipping my hands through black smooth strands.

Then the quick little black skirt,
a more difficult undertaking with fishbone buttons
and a seamless zipper,
At least it seems that way when my arms
caress the curves, until it startles my nerves
and the skirt falls silently to the floor.

You might be interested to know
she was standing in the middle of her
second-floor office cubicle,
an animal caught in the headlights,
staring at the vacant parking lot,
wondering about the black tread marks
racing into the night.

Ancient lingerie graced her small frame,
a miracle in modern times
these garments of years gone by,
and like some nomadic thief
I caught the straps and slipped them
down, ready to go, go, go.

The next day, I wrote about Leda,
I her swan, but —
no, it's too much to tell now;
maybe some other day...

I can tell you, though,
her eyes wandered in painful ecstasy,
“Sigmund, you good,” her Freudian slip,
and delving into her Jungian collective
for words to describe the experience,
for something to relate it to.

And I could hear the whispered breath
when I knicked the tiny top hook
out of the needle-eye of her brassiere

and I could see her silent sigh when the brassiere fell
the way some people might sigh when they realize
that Freud is not God,
that Seligman is a Jewish name,
that cognitive thinking is helpful
especially on a psychology exam.

Tea Anyone?

Sarah Quartuccio

Stoneware



Confession

Katherine Stembel

When I was five I tried to kill my sister.

But she didn't die.

And life is all the more miserable because of it.

I didn't really mean to try to kill my sister. It was actually her fault. She wanted to play candy store. If shed been the smiling clerk asking, "Would you like another jelly bean, miss?" I'd be dead right now because everyone knows three-year-olds are too dumb to run and scream for mama that Sister is dying!

No.

They stand with their thumbs stuck six miles into their mouths, snuffing up their snotty noses and wondering with their big, blank eyes why you're lying there turning green and twitching.

But she didn't give me the pills we found on the grass left over from the good-for-nothing renters who were evicted for being three months behind in rent and running a meth lab in our basement.

And she didn't die because I was a big five-year-old who screamed for mama because Barbie was lying on the pavement turning green and twitching.

I wish I'd been the customer and had eaten the bright pills and turned green and died. Or, better yet, not screamed for mama and stood there dumb like all the three-year-olds do. Then Barbie would have died and life would be peaceful.

But she didn't die.

And life stinks.



the horizon in which i follow

Nicole Swafford

Let the stars be my guide
For which I must follow.
Let the sparkle shine
Upon my face.
And the planets by my
Worlds to venture.
Let it all be my life's journey
In which I must learn
Life's lessons.
No matter how hard
Give me the strength
To follow,
Your words; Your messages
Give me the power,
To make you proud; To succeed
I am yours, all yours
Tell me your demands

Woven Flowers

Jessica Lamping

Flowers woven together
A small wreath to hang on the corner
More flowers, singly laid, in front
A hat, meant for hiding, pinned down
A symbol of someone far away, fighting
A hand traces letters carved letters in cold grey stone
Then outlines the pictures
A strong breeze swoops in
The wreath is blown off the corner
The hand snatches it quickly
Lays the wreath in front
The hand touches the corner again
New tears fall on woven flowers

My Father, My Friend

Carla Luzadder

Little girls are made of sugar and spice,
Giggles and curls, and everything nice.
The hugs, the smiles, the piggy back rides,
I was the apple of my daddy's eyes.

Time spent with dads is unique from most moms.

Held safe and secure in Dad's loving arms,
Rides on the mower, the wind in your hair,
Trips to get ice cream, the fun at the fair.

You look up to a dad when things get bad,
Lean on his shoulder when times may be sad.
You hide in the corner when you've done wrong,
But greet him on mornings with dance and song.

Then one day when the years wither and fade,
Those bright summer days turn to shades of gray,
Childhood memories replaced by today,
As innocent abandon drifts away.

Sundays were spent with my father, my friend,
Ready and willing to offer his hand.
Bargain hunters, I'm a chip off the block,
Who could have known we were racing the clock?

Fathers seem to have all the right answers,
Except when the answer is cancer.
Strength and courage can't change the prognosis,
And cancer's not cured with a hug and kiss.

His lips were moving not making a sound.
Words were familiar, the meaning profound.
I couldn't swallow with tears in my throat,
All the while hearing, "But there's always hope."

We take that last walk to your resting place.
Sadness falls freely running down my face.

The salty taste when I try to swallow,
As the minister speaks of pain and sorrow.

Take some time to grieve, the minister said,
But life continues and we move ahead.

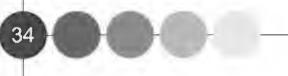
Seven short decades have crumbled to dust.
Only God determines what's right and just.

Now there's no hand to hold when tears are shed,
No band-aids or kisses when knees have bled.

There's no quick fix to prepare for the end,
Only the memories of my best friend.

Goodbye, Dad.

In loving memory of Carl Allen
My father and dear friend
Born – April 18, 1934
Ascended to Heaven on May 20, 2004



Princess of Shadow and Death

Danielle Marshall

Only in dreams she comes
to bless the wicked and the damned
Stars hiding her mission
Blessing her heart with moonlight
She was born of Dark
but saved by Light
Her course is set and clear
Do not wait
Pray to her now
You wicked souls
Let her bless you and heal you
Restoring you to the Light
Sympathy and understanding in her heart
She knows your pain
She sees your resistance
She believes in your repentance
The Princess of Shadow and Death
My angel in my heart
Calls to all you damned souls
She'll guide you where you need to go
Allowing you to be forgiven and accepted –
Love's only desires for you

Skeptical Corkscrew

Mark Seely

Begin without doubts: an empiricist with unflinching faith in your senses.

Then study sensation and find that you don't see what's really there.

Then study perception and discover that you are a grand fabricator building complex structures out of thin air, impregnating the world with the seeds of your own mind.

Then study cognitive representation and become a relativist—an infinity of distinct possibilities, yet the world embraces each as her only child.

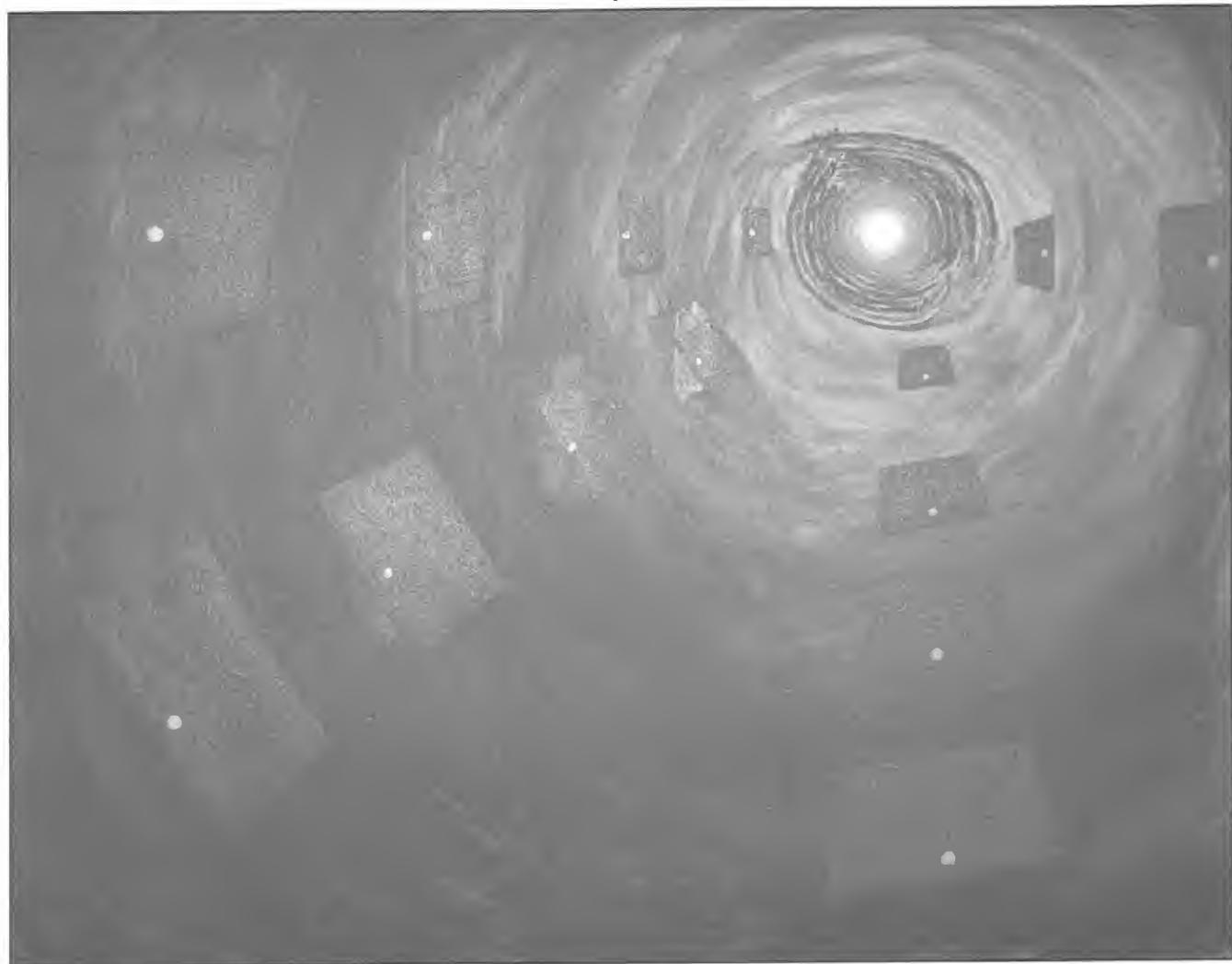
Then study consciousness and slip twisting into a vortex of contradiction and paradox, where "self" is a buoy without an anchor, an endless trail of breadcrumbs on a bird-infested path back to where you started, bright-eyed and trusting.

And you are an empiricist again, but only because all other options leave you pinched atop the fulcrum of your own breath: an empiricist, a realist, but this time standing ankle-deep in oblivion.

Which Door is Mine?

Jake Dean

Acrylic



Superninno

Superninno is Italian for the opera singer who sings the highest pitches.

Ami Tuft

The lights were dim.
The cat was asleep.
Our bodies were a perfect fit,
And when they met,
An electrical storm charged through us.
The opportunity opened,
Then closed,
Opened,
Then closed,
Opened,
Moments away from the plunge.
I was lifted higher and higher until I could no longer hang on.
Heaven parted and a stream of the purest, forgiving light
Shined on the most honest part of my heart
When my mouth parted,
I poured
In the most moving staccato aria, an opera
Ringing from a place much deeper than my throat or lungs,
Shaking him with echoes of my deepest fears freed.
I was left humming,
And he lay beside me gasping holy harmonic bliss,
That he'd been to the same sacred place as I.

“With just the touch of our fingers
Oh, we could make our circuitry explode”
- Joni Mitchell



A Place of Life and the Dead

Gabriele Nichols

Oakwood Cemetery is a place where many people, including myself, have faced some of the greatest sadness of life. There, hundreds of residents of my hometown have been laid to rest. I have learned to despise the newest sections of that place, but not because of my own bad memories.

The new sections of the graveyard have been planned with military precision, though the military section is deep within the older monuments. To be able to cram as many bodies as possible into as little space as possible, the graves are neatly placed out on flattened ground. Rows upon rows of rocky monuments erupt from the Earth in perfectly straight lines and perfectly straight rows with perfectly straight roads alongside. Between the graves a few small trees grow all too slowly, too few to provide anything but shade to a few graves and evidence of some careful landscaping. The planning here is too perfect, no humanity in a place where so many people lie.

The old, filled sections of Oakwood tell a different story. There the grave markers are not freshly hewn stone with perfect engraving. Instead, they are worn, showing time that does not stop even for the dead. There is history here, with some graves dating back to the Civil War, the dates and names recorded somewhere, but here nearly lost to the erosion.

The graves here are haphazard and unique. Hilly ground and twisted pathways snake through the monuments, a perfect place for walks and bicycling when I was a child. An odd form of art, a wide variety of statues, pillars, and mausoleums mark the most extravagant graves. Other graves show less formed or even homemade stones. One of my great uncles built his own marker before his death, forming it from a mass of different shapes, sizes, and colors of rock.

Though this is still a place for the dead, death is not the prevalent feeling like that of the newest sections. Life fills this part of the cemetery. Plants and living things emerge from everywhere, not just some planned foliage. Ancient trees, some probably older than the graveyard itself, stand guard over the headstones, towering over the hallowed place. The calls of a multitude of birds fill the air as squirrels forage among the headstones. These creatures make their home here, because it is safe, since no predator would dare disturb such a place.

The new Oakwood, the modern cemetery, inspires that classic feeling of dread because everything emphasizes death. However, in the aged sections of the place I find beauty, peace, even comfort. Old Oakwood is no place of death, even though the dead may reside there.

Tick Tock
And the time goes by
Sleep Sleep
where my mind can run and hide
Somewhere you can't find
Time has been so short
And when I sleep I don't miss you at all
The hurt is gone
My mind rests easy
Your Body is haunted
I laugh because now... you cry
You told me I didn't have what it takes
But I made it all without you by my side
You continue walking baby
Because you're to far behind
Tick Tock
And the time goes by
Sleep Sleep
I've said my good-byes

Daily Supplement

Michael Moore

Yellow, peach, red, and brown.
These are the keys
To happiness.

While eating breakfast
I pop them in
My mouth.

Chemicals pulse
Through my veins.

Sending messages to
Live, live, live.

Without these pills
I am
Nothing.

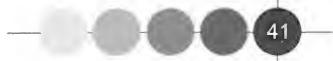
Dead, dead, dead
Is what I should
Be.

My precious life savers
Do not float.

Yet they gloat and tease
To appease me is
Not enough.

Mood swings come
And go.

Like a summer storm with
Its calm.



Pills are my life.

Pills are my friend.

Pills are not always there
But when they are
I am there.

If They Married and Other Phone Book Stories

Eileen Kerlin

This all started with Marla Musch. Now, I don't personally know her, but I know she is a beautician in town. However, I do know Barb Misch. I got to thinking that what if one of Barb Misch's sons had married Marla? She would have been Marla Musch Misch. Or maybe if one of Barb's daughter's had married a Musch? A Misch Musch for sure.

As I chuckled to myself, I grabbed the Rensselaer phone book, which has 55 pages including the yellow pages. I stuck to the listings of last names and got a yellow legal pad. It was a rainy day in March and I was home nursing bronchitis. I propped up the pillows in my bed, pulled the comforter up around me and began listing last names that would be "interesting" if they were connected through marriage.

I came up with a few right away. For example, pity the poor girl whose maiden name is Patty Peach. She is courted by two men – a Potts and a Peel. Who should she choose to be? A Patty Peach Potts or a Patty Peach Peel. I think I'd choose the latter no matter who the man was. Or, how about a family of five Long sisters. They marry Large, Flatt, Gross, Bendt and Poor men. How sad. Hopefully, the Lovely sisters would marry Rich, Sharp, Eger guys and the youngest would choose a Witty Merriman.

Two hours after I started this, I emerged from my bedroom with names from A-Z. I re-listed them by categories that included occupations, verbs, nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and generally funny sounding names. Strong cough medicine may have played a role in this exercise in the beginning, but even after I was recovered I kept honing my lists until my family began to wonder about the spare time I seemed to have in my days. They laughed at first, second and even third pronouncements of my witty plays on names. Then, my husband said, "You're still doing this?" My son added, "You need to get another job, Mom." When my daughter quipped, "You're crazy," I decided to continue in secrecy until I had exhausted the possibilities and felt satisfied with my creative genius. This has never happened. I have become obsessed. I have become a mad punster, playful lexicographer. (That's someone who likes words, I remember from a book I picked up at a library sale called *The Joy of Lex*.)

I now have a folder bursting with yellow legal pad lists, anecdotes, stories, jokes, more stories and more word play exercises than I can handle. I have to put it away at night in a drawer so it is out of sight and out of mind. I've had to pull my tired self away from typing these on the computer to stretch, eat and sleep after hours of mind-numbing name combining, pouring over Debbie Dill Pickles and White Wooley Winkles.

For your enjoyment and for my sanity, I give you my collection of names. Take into consideration the growing divorce and remarrying statistics that would make these at all plausible. (Who am I kidding? These names would hardly happen...would they?) If along the way, I have offended anyone I sincerely apologize. The names are not fictional, of course, but the combinations are contrived, convoluted and concocted by a woman who obviously needs another creative outlet.

I'll start with a few possible marriage tongue twisters.

Georgia Goodman and Gordon Goodwin, Georgia Goodwin, (Go Girl!)
Holly Hopper and Howard Hooper, hence Holly Hopper Hooper
Louise Lemming Lanoue loves Larry Lareau
Will Wilma Waddel Whipple wed Wally Wampler

Here's a noisy bunch that could get together some day.

Carol Click divorces Carl Klopp to marry Kyle Klomp and becomes Carol Click Klopp Klomp

Susie's Storey

Susie DeYoung marries David Schwank only to divorce Dave and marry Sam Schenks.
Susie decides she'd rather Schwing with Steve, so it follows that
Susie DeYoung Schwank Schenks Schwing.

Here are some headlines, some that will hopefully never appear in the *Rensselaer Republican*.

Lakin Valley Leak Lotta Mudd
Mann Ogle Nunn, Sparks Storey
Mann Wynn Large Primeau Holmes
Price Lowe Sell Stuff
Mann Dye, Short Storey
Carpenter Hammer Down Fortune
Plummer Sinks Fortune
Short Babe Trapp Taulman
Mann Overton Sinks
Judge Grant Hooker Rich Herre
Barber Combs Balding Mann
DeMoss Grow Wooley Daily
Summer Snow Surprise
Rainwater Rust Hesson Herz Steel Shields

Watz Watt? Watz Goin Downs? Watz Dewing?

Glad you asked. I made it through college as an English major. "Of course," you say to yourself. "Now all of this nonsense makes some sense. She was an English major, and always looking for some sort of deeper meaning in things. But in the phone book? How absurd." Bear with me a little longer and you may see how the college tuition loans finally paid off.

An Ode to Shakespeare, The Earnest Bard
(Sorry, Dr. Garrity. It's not in Iambic Pentameter.)

Knight, McKnight, Meek Dewey Moon.
Blue Black Valley, Stark White Castle.
Summers Marsh Meadows Moore Lovely.
Ponder Devine Wiles Inman.
Hale Humble Friend! Webb Weaver!
Parrish, Marr, Drain, Wilder Fuller Love?
May Able Love Strain, Grow Rich, English Yeoman!
Grant Utter Bliss, Eden.

Is it all just a little too much? Well, fasten your seat belts. I'm just getting wound up. Any Catholic School survivors out there? I am one, but I want the record to state that I have never been hit by a nun, ever. The nuns I grew up with who include Sister Mary Holy Water and Sister Divine Intervention, in the Precious Holier Than Thou Paris didn't have to resort to such tactics. A clatter or clang of their rosary beads as they moved down the hall would cancel any thoughts of misbehavior. This next little jungle is simply another recitation of the classic rough nun vs. bad boy story.

DeBoard Kidd Nunn Storey

Furst DeBoard Kidd Hunt Nunn's Byrd
Kidd Ames Straight
Pieces Sparrow's Wing
Nunn Belt Kid
Lotta Waling
DeBoard Kidd Moon Nunn
Nunn Hammer Kidd
Kidd Howell and Hugg
DeBoard Kidd Sinks Lowe
Flick Major Stone
Render Nunn Flatt. O'Mary!
Christman!
Nun Hurd Bell, Sparks, Starz
Nunn Peo
Reel Messman
Nunn Order Kidd "Sunday!"
Wood Nunn Teach Kidd?
Nunn Teach, Love, Cross, Justice

Sunday Long.
Nunn Cook Stuff
Kidd Wolf Stuff, Order Moore
Kid Gas, Pucka, Pugh!
Watz Nunn Dunne?
Kidd May Dye!
Blackletter Day
Surprise! Hoaks! Kidd Faker!
Kidd Teach Nunn Justice
Hurd Kidd Nunn Call Deal
Pals, Love, Order, Sunday Best
Kidd Grow
Kidd Goodman
Humble Mann Lovely Nunn Friend
Hale Justice Inman
Hale Nunn.

Wow! And if that wasn't enough of a Hallmark moment, try this one.

A Love Storey of a Different Kind
Carr Cruz Long Flatt Miles
Rainey Valley Farmer Fields
Bigg Wheeler Cruise Rhoads
Wheeler Cross Carr
Horn! Yerk! Powell!
Large Bigg Wheeler Hamer Little Carr.
Carr Sinks Down Mudd.
Car Trapp Purdy Babe.
Strong Bigg Wheeler Mann Rush
Mann Strain Able Luck!
Babe Utter "Kaye"
Mann Utter "Schuh."
Call Tow.

How about a few jokes?

Watz Black, Brown and White?
My colored friends. (Sorry so politically incorrect.)

Watz Rhuede, Stout and Gross?
Hicks

Watz Blue, Black and White?
Nunn Down Snow Bank.

Did you know this?

Rich Mann Trump Smart Mann.
Wiseman Trump Rich Mann.
Goodmann Trump Wiseman.

How about another phone book story? You may want to dig out your Tony Soprano imitation for this.

Conn Mann Kaper

Petty Conn Mann Max
Rich Conn Man Dickey
Pals

Max Hatch Kaper

Max: "Dickey, Blue Demon. Best Horsestar. Longstretch. Wannemaker?"

Dickey: "Shurr. Lotta Betz. Bigg Poole."

Petty Conn Mann Max, Benedict Arnold.

Max Cross Dickey

Max: "Denver Night Big Poole. Lotz."

Friend Warne Dickey.

Dickey: "Hey Budreau!"

Dickey Hammer Max.

Cutlip, Bendt Head.

Max Hollar, Crouch Lowe, "Blaha!"

Conn Mann Max Hurtz.

Lucky Dickey Rich Mann.

Faith and Begora, now it is time for...An Irish Lullaby

Poore Patrick O'Malley
Irishman Drunksi Strong Stout
Uzzle, Uzzle, Big Bender
Lesh Berry Plaster Potts
Hicks, Belcher

Nunn: "Teske, Teske"
Nunn Rouse Patrick
Nunn Order "Sunday!"
Nunn Bigger, Nunn Wynn
O'Malley Swallow Black Coffee
Downs Lotta Cupp
Boose Dunn
Nunn Order: "Reed, Read, Reid!"
O'Malley Read
Irishman Work Reel Goode
Patrick Gaines Pride
Nunn Lotta Pride
Patrick O'Malley Newman!

I live across from Brookside Park. I don't want visitors, but my name is in the phone book so there is no sense in keeping this a secret. I just wanted you to know that I see a lot of family reunion signs in the pavilions at the park during the summer. Imagine these...

The Furst Smart Kidd Reunion
The Black, White, Turner Brown Reunion
In that same vein...
The Blue, Green, Lemon Theil Reunion
The Lovely Rose Sharp Thorne Reunion
The Lotta Rich Hicks Reunion
The Hooker Loveall Reunion
The Tinkle Tinkle Little Starr Reunion
The Plant Roach Weed Reunion
The Mann Sinks Lower Kiser Bottoms Reunion.

A Reel Fish Story

Mann, Friend Fishing Pals
Wade Down Lowe
Friend Hooks Bass, Gill
Armstrong, Reel Reel
"Figs!" Bass Sinks.
Mann Fishing
Hay! Hooks Trout!

Armstrong, Reel Reel
 Hopp Hopp, Reel Reel
 Mann Gaines Bigg Trout!
 Keen Troutman
 "Figs" Trout Sinks.
 Mann: Bigg Bigg Trout, Overton!
 Friend: Schurr...Bigg Fish Storey
 Mann: Bigg Trout! Overton!
 Mann Friend Feicht
 Mann Friend Deal
 Turner Page
 Hunt Trapp Beaver

A musical interlude from Frankie...

"I've been a Merchant, a Miller, A Page and a King.
 I've been a Forrester, Plummer – you know what I mean."

Use your best Pepe Le Peu French accent to say this one. If you don't know who Pepe is, maybe you remember Corporal LeBeau from *Hogan's Heroes*, or these days the bee in an allergy commercial.

Pfeffer Fish

Zea French Mann Fry Crisp Pfeffer Fish.
 Zea French Mann Lear Lovely Young Laffoon.
 Laffoon Love Zea French Mann.
 Zea French Manny Ogle, "La Tulip, Dewey Fry Pfeffer Fish, Lah Little Lilly?"
 Lovely Laffoon Utter "Lotz."
 Ahhhh.....

There are some names in our phone book that could become x-rated stories. But, I shied away from those for publication. (Though I do have a few carefully hidden pages buried in my notebook.) I'll leave you to your own imaginations for that. Anyway, the raciest I felt I should get was to tell...

A Hooker Story

Lovely Young Hooker
 Hardly Rich Mann
 Hooker Peel Purdy, Devine! Ritz!
 Wiseman Warne Rich Mann.
 Friend Warne Rich Mann.

Goodman Warne Rich Mann.
Rich Mann Reel Dumas.
Hooker Sharp Babe.
Hooker Robb Rich Mann.
Poor Rich Mann.
Hooker Cross Dickey, (Con Mann, remember?)
Dickey Pullins Kaper.
Dickey Trapps Hooker
Dickey Robbs Hooker Lotta Mannie.
Hooker Hollar: "Buttholder!"
Dickey: "Lovely. Klassie. DeWitt."

Dewees Dunne Wright?

Almost. I'll leave you with a few German and Dutch names. Let's tap into *Hogan's Heroes* again for this. Dredge up either your Sargent Schultz or Colonel Klink accents. Warning: These are definitely a Long-stretch.

Rouse Vanderkamp Babe Feicht
Voss Vanderkamp Ott Bein?
Vanderkamp Feicht Rouse Koss Rouse Vis Vanderkamp Babe.
Cripe!
Vanderkamp Zapp Rouse Flatt.
DeJong!
Judge Rheul Vanderkamp Freeman.
Judge Order Rouse Post Bond
Vanderkamp Wright.
Rouse Van Wienen
Zak Lee.

If I were Ida...

Ida Love Moore
Ida Jokes Moore
Ida Hunt Down Strong Young Rich Lawyer
Why Ida...

That's all Foulkes!

Not an Ordinary Ballerina

Courtney Hancock

Coiled Stoneware Sculpture

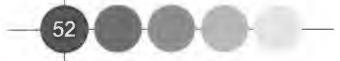


The Outcast

David Spencer

If I cannot enjoy a baseball game
Then I am as good as dead
For nine soldiers on a dirt diamond,
In the most peaceful of wars
Enjoying the plodding pace
Of passing time in this past time
Understanding a deeper meaning
That I could never hope to find

Men are not any stronger
Than the competition they face
And if I am better than an ant
Then I am not any better of a man
My hands write down these words
But my mind is far removed
Poems I write do not provide shelter
Over the heads of a family in the rain
Metaphors do not feed the stomachs
Of a man without a job
And my puns do not clean the floor
Of a high school cafeteria
I am all thought but no verbs
And what good is a writer
If his words only exist on the page?



He Said to Me....

Christine Schmelter

Those brown eyes of yours hold secrets,
secrets that are locked deep,
hidden far in the outer reaches of the whites of your eyes.

I can't reach those secrets now,
but I know that some day
those secrets that are hidden deep in those whites
and in the recesses of those deep, dark brown pools
will float down to your beautiful mouth
and I'll finally know all the parts of you

Birthing a Babe Through Glowing Tunnel

Parody of Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"

Katherine Stembel

The tunnel through which I came did glow,
Squeezed tight and pushed and pulled hard so.
I forged ahead, I had no fear,
When I emerged, the light did grow.

I did not know that I was here,
When dripped on me a single tear.
I cried, I bawled, 'twas for her sake,
And she cried too, for I was near.

Into her arms me she did take,
I could tell her love was not fake.
Together, softly we did sleep,
Without a sound, without a quake.

Contented as one we did breathe,
My tiny side she ne'er would leave,
With months to go before I teethe,
With months to go before I teethe.



Autumn Sky

Carla Luzadder

The brightness of daylight is nearly done.
Mere moments are left of the setting sun.
Painted patterns stretch across autumn's sky,
Changing the canvas as seconds pass by.

Ripples of blue blend with bright shades of gold,
Spectrums of color as the clouds unfold,
Sending out tendrils of feathering light,
A spectacular sight, just before night.

God created sunsets for all to share.
Lifting up spirits from pain and despair,
The color of comfort softens and warms,
Blankets of peace spread like God's open arms.

Ladybug or Turtle?

Sarah Quartuccio

Oil on Canvas



Memories of Fishing

Stacey West

Acrylic



Autobiographical Life Cycle

Ryan Preston
Acrylic on Stoneware





Wheel Thrown Sphere

Ryan Preston

Porcelain Glazed with Celadon and Blue Under Glaze, Cone 10



Rising Emotion

Stacey West

Marbling



Venetian Vessel

Jessica O'Neal

Film (EOS Canon Rebel 2000 SLR w/ Tamron 28-105 lens)



Far Away

Erica Domzalski

Painting on Glass

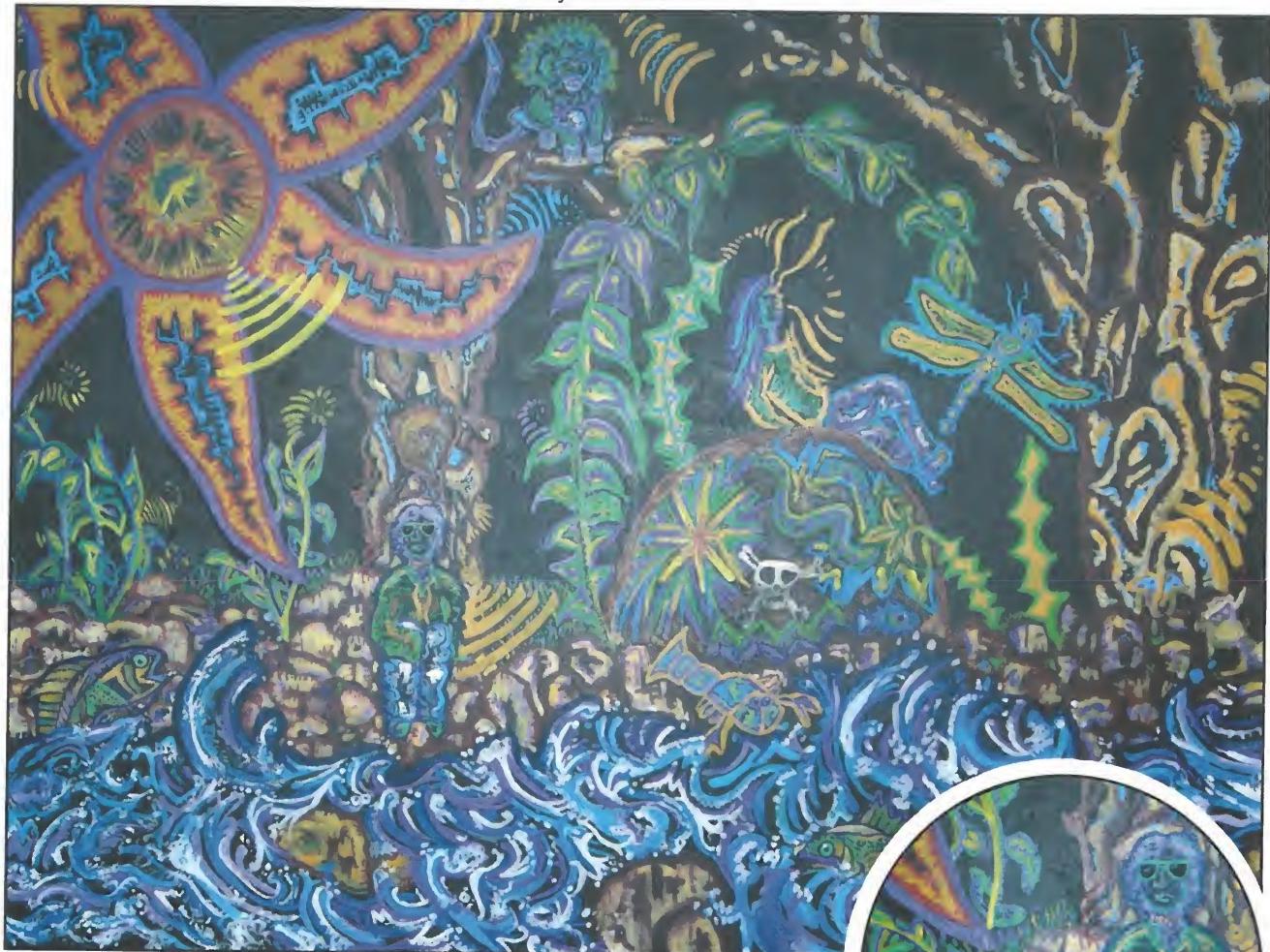




Dead Rock

Christina Walter

Acrylic on Canvas



Detail

At The Lake

Stacey West

Acrylic



Surf's Up!

Sarah Quartuccio

Oil on Canvas Board



Final Harvest, 2006

Bonnie Zimmer

Found Objects, Corn Husks, Willow, Linen, Beads, Feathers, Thorns, Pebbles



Devil Playing Poker

Erica Domzalski

Painting on Glass



My Journey into the Bowels of Hell, Or The Café

David C. Santangelo

I awoke one morning, as all men must, to the chiming of my clock piercing my very eardrums. The piercing echoed into my very soul, mimicking my heartbeat, and taunting me as if to say: "Your joyous slumber in the arms of Morpheus is over, you now belong to me." Already I can feel the accursed stench come over me, the stench that torments my nostrils like a pack of mosquitoes who descend on their prey with the merciless stinging from their spines. The stench comes over me now, it is taking hold, and my entire body is saturated by it. I am so drenched in this vile fog of odor that I cannot contain myself any longer; I must take a shower to wash this horrid stink off my body. The stench is one most horrid and all who are unfortunate enough to smell it instantly recognize its pungent aroma. It is the stench of the food that the cooks are preparing in the café.

As I approach the shower, I am reminded that everyday I am doomed to the same fate of stomaching this food. Day in and day out, week after week, month after month, I cannot escape this punishment! I walk into the shower and turn on the water, hoping that water will be able to wash away the plague that I am afflicted with, but to no avail. The water only embeds the stench deeper and deeper into my skin; it is almost so deep in fact that the stench and myself have almost become one being. The stench is entering into my soul, corrupting my very existence the farther and farther down it falls. Shamefully, I step out of the shower and dry myself off with the stench now firmly embedded in the very fabric of my being. I slowly put on my clothes and prepare myself for the long and arduous journey which I must take, the walk to the café for breakfast.

The walk alone is painful enough, knowing that the café is my only source of nourishment. It is either endure the grotesque food of the café or starve to death, and being one of the thinnest people in the known world, I will take my chances with the food of the café. Along my death march I encounter my dormitory fellow Phineas, a rather jolly soul, who would not for one moment complain about anything in the world, regardless of how repulsive it may be. He strode up beside me and gently said in the most calm and collected manner, which even the most sophisticated of men would envy,

"The food is atrocious! I cannot endure one more bite of this poor excuse that they ingratiatingly call sustenance!"

"I know my friend, I know. The entrées the cooks conjure up would make cannibalism seem tame and civilized." I replied. "However there is nothing more we can do. We can only hope that some day, God willing, a pupil will keel over from these disgusting provisions and in so doing become a martyr so that our loving parents will be obliged to petition for better rations."

Then the pair of us marched on into the inner sanctum where all the devils and demons were free to practice their dark art, the entrance to the café itself. As we were walking in I happened to spy an inscription above the doorway that read: "Abandon all hope, ye who enter here." I also spied, if my eyes were not cheated or deceived by some spell, the mythical beast Cerberus guarding the entrance of that most foul and wretched

of places. His massive maw was opened wider than that of the great abyss itself. He was ready to pounce on anyone who showed even the slightest hesitation to enter the café. Feeling myself unwilling to challenge the fearsome might of the beast, I ventured in with much trepidation.

What I saw in this cauldron of putrid bile did nothing to alleviate my suffering. The breakfast menu consisted of apples whose cores were rotten and infested with vermin and the soup boiled and bubbled in such a way that the great playwright William Shakespeare would have hid his face in shame. This was a good day for the food in the café. I gather up the food which I think is the least likely to give me indigestion later in my day and I sit down and begrudgingly try to stomach matter that even the devil would not find fit to put into hell.

The food had a bitterness which could only be described as an acid-like quality, which would make even the most strong and resilient of men wish that they were not born with the blessing of a human tongue. Oh what agony! How can I endure anymore of this cruelty? Then I spy Jedediah, another fellow of my acquaintance, and I bid him to sit down with me, so we both can complain about the quality of this fodder.

"What say you Jedediah? Isn't this the poorest excuse for cuisine that you have had the unfortunate pleasure to dine upon? I daresay that even the great Cyclops who held Odysseus captive would surely smite those who concocted this so-called fine dining." I said with a slight laugh of pity for myself. He looked me directly in both eyes and he said to me with all earnestness and sincerity,

"I thoroughly enjoy the food the cooks produce for us. Nay they are not cooks at all and they are certainly not chefs. To call them chefs would be the greatest insult that one could utter in their presence. They are masters of the culinary arts and should be commended for the admirable job in creating the very food that sustains us and drives us throughout the day."

I sat aghast at this statement, how could anyone think that these delicatessens are anything but inedible? After a few seconds I recovered from my simpleton-like state and I retorted,

"My dear friend Jedediah, I do believe that you are suffering from the horrors of indigestion and are not in control of your faculties! What the cooks are conjuring up has not been classified by science yet and it is most undeserving of the accolades which you have lauded it!"

Jedediah seemed unable to comprehend what I just told him. He was staunch in his support for the food. I however did not share his zeal and with a disgusting glance he gave to me he picked up his food and moved elsewhere to others who shared his unwavering support. After my failed attempt to gain an ally in Jedediah, I picked up my fork and tried to endure another bite of this refuse. I reached for my knife to cut a piece of the rancid meat and I tried with all my might to separate the meat in twain. The strength it took me to cut that cow hide, could rival that of Hercules and all his twelve labors. When I was finally able to sever a portion onto my own fork I noticed that knife was splintered and that its shards now graced my meal.

"At least this will make it more appetizing," I said to myself with a laugh. As I pulled the carcass towards my mouth I think I heard something. It seemed to be coming from the meat, so I altered my hand's trajectory from my mouth to my ear. I was so astounded at what I heard. If anyone had told me this I would not

have believed it but as doubting Thomas became a believer when he touched the wounded hands of Christ, I too believed what I heard. I distinctly heard the unchanging, all-encompassing thump of a heartbeat! This was the absolute last straw. I did not have anymore stamina; I put down my fork and began to walk out of the café. As I strode past the Cerberus, I was rocked by the most horrid realization. It was as if Atlas had transferred the weight of the world from his shoulders to mine and I held my head down in utter defeat. I realized that the day has only just begun and I have to bear two more courses of this wretched torture for lunch and dinner.

"Oh, Goddess of Fortune, you are a cruel mistress!"



All She Could Think

Amber Slagal

Maybe a dip in the baptismal pool
would cure her sadness
as the congregation filed in front of the wooden carrying case,
sobbing.

But, her new
black
dress
with the lacy, ruffled hem
would be ruined forever.

A long mahogany casket lay stiff in front of her;
almost as stiff as her ass
from sitting on the pews for the long line of viewers.
She never got up to ...
look.

The thought crossed her mind.
Instead, she sat for the six hour viewing
staring at fans turning,
pages blowing,
people's shiny shoes.

They all figured she was in a
state of shock.

No one person could be more wrong.
She felt obligated to be there
(being the grieving widow and all).
She'd rather be sitting alone,
reading a good Patricia Highsmith whodunit.
The phantom smell of her favorite green tea —
daintily splashed with kumquat extract—
winding up through her nostrils
was almost as real as her husband's sudden death.
Closing her eyes,
she pretended everyone was gone.
Just her and a box.
What should she say to him?
The husband loved by all,

hated by one.
He left her with painful memories,
guilt,
two step children with no real mother,
recently acquired crabs, and
debt.
Would it be so wrong to stand next to
his "Welcome Home to Hell" box
and, instead of cry and shake as a widow should,
laugh uncontrollably,
performing song and dance numbers
from off-Broadway musicals?
If only she cared a little more.
She would run to his casket and jump atop,
ripping every lily from that damn evergreen wreath.
Some flower filled formation raped the air
with its musty fake smell
and compounded her growing migraine.
All she could think was, "damn it!"
Nothing else.



Existing

Katherine Stembel

I'm not suited for this world,
Not equipped for the next.
Where I'll end up
Is anybody's guess.

Stick a knife in my heart and twist,
Wonder if I'll even be missed.
Stick a knife in my heart and twist,
To stop the awful pain that persists.

Anyone should see I'm crying,
From the inside out I'm dying.
Want to live. Want to die.
Just exist.

Never good enough
For him or her or them,
Wrapped in black and dirt
And slime and grime and sin.

Redemption doesn't know my face,
And soon you'll see my fall from grace.
"Shuffle off this mortal coil" of pain,
Never breathe on earth or heaven again.

Lost

Kristel Miller
Photography





I Miss the Sea

Danielle Marshall

I miss the Sea
Sunset Eternities
Our souls
Soaring
Soundless Lullabies
and Spring mornings Renewing.

I miss the Sky
Twilight Dreams
Our hearts
Skipping
Beats unheard
and Summer evenings Nourishing.

I miss the Vale
Beyond Sight
Our minds
Released
Tormenting Realities
and Autumn days Fading.

I miss the Earth
Decaying Life
Our bodies
Failing
Releasing Pain
and Winter nights Lingering.

I miss you.

One Day the Swamp May Win

Gabriele Nichols

One of my college professors once remarked that Indiana was once just like Louisiana, the only major difference being Indiana became very cold in the winter. He was referring to the fact that at one time much of Indiana was swampland and wetlands, something not always apparent today. One of the few things Indiana is famous, infamous, for is its corn. The state is filled with thousands upon thousands of stalks of corn. These fields long ago claimed much of the swampy land, turning the natural landscape into a maddeningly dull sea of maize.

However, in a few small places among the fields and towns of Indiana the old nature of the land is still visible. My hometown especially shows areas of the swamp still thriving among the city, the housing developments, and the farms. Mere blocks from the major highways and the busy downtown, some of these lands still possess the same variety of wildlife and vegetation that once was dominant before the corn. Some of the areas even the most overzealous developers or farmers refuse to touch, so damp, swampy, and unstable that attempting to use the land would be near madness.

Since both of the homes in my life have been mere blocks from each other and the city center, I have enjoyed the merging of the developed world with the persistent old environment. A short walk from both of these houses is one of the largest remaining areas of swampy land. Eventually spreading down towards one of the lakes of the area, this land is overgrown and wild, only altered by human hands with the few paths placed through the undergrowth and trees.

The trees are actually one of the most refreshing sights from within this miniature wilderness. Unlike Michigan to the North, where everything is trees for miles in all directions, Indiana seems possessed simply by the aforementioned corn. The trees within this swampland grow immense, providing a beautiful, verdant canopy of leaves in the summer. When autumn approaches, these trees quickly explode into their warmest, wildest colors of foliage, a stark contrast to the unchanging evergreen trees some choose to plant.

These trees provide a home for many creatures that would be otherwise lost among the suburban sprawl. Of course, there are the standard assortment of squirrels, especially tiny ones with pitch-black fur, and a diverse range of common birds, from robins and blue jays to noisy woodpeckers. Among the soft earth are multitudes of holes, the evidence of chunky groundhogs that still manage to flee at the slightest sign of humanity. These creatures often wander in towns and smaller cities, but not usually in such large numbers. Sometimes, when the trees are at their most productive, squirrels are present in multiples in every lawn, often chasing each other for territory.

The trees of the swampland also provide homes for animals that usually do not associate so closely with civilization. Blue herons, gorgeous, tall, lanky birds with an almost metallic shade of blue plumage, occasionally drift through the air, taking position within the trees along the lake, protected from curious observers. Attracted by the protection from both fast moving traffic and hunters, small herds of deer have also taken residence within the misplaced swampland. These gentle creatures only venture from the trees in the calmest hours of dusk and the quiet hours of the morning, venturing into the yards of nearby houses for any signs of

edible foliage. I have awoken some mornings and looked out my back porch to see a full-grown deer almost staring back before it darts across the alley and back into protection.

This situation is idyllic both for a child and for a nature lover. However, like so many other times, humanity and nature cannot seem to coexist. Every year these unspoiled areas face new challenges from sections of the populous that do not see the benefit or beauty of the natural world. Residents of some housing developments have pressed for hunting of deer within city limits. Even though the fauna within the town is not overpopulated and far from dangerous, these individuals see the deer as a nuisance worthy of firing guns among the citizenry. Such a dangerous step requires drastic reasons, but these annoyed individuals are simply upset because the deer are feeding from some landscaped bushes.

The continuing development of Warsaw as a commercial community also challenges the remaining natural land. The Wal-Mart corporation decided to build one of the world's largest of its stores and chose an area previously undeveloped instead of using locations already littered with half-open strip malls. As a result, opportunistic developers began developing every inch of ground near the new gargantuan store, stripping out trees, filling in the land, all for developments that, several years later, have yet to touch the now spoiled area.

Oddly, it seems nature is gradually fighting back. The swampy land gradually overtakes land long ago cleared for development or farming. A large field once used for baseball, now a peewee football field, has developed a miniature wetland alongside that the government is actually intervening to protect. Marshy weeds have overtaken a long closed miniature golf course long ago closed, slowly tearing apart the remaining putting structures as the ground returns to its long lost state.

Even my father and stepmother have found the land resisting. Needing more room on their farm, my father painstakingly eliminated a small area of swampy land. Cleared of everything, this area took only an average amount of rainfall and snowfall before, within a year, it had become more wild than before, filled with cattails and tall grasses once again thriving, salamanders and frogs flocking back to their former habitat.

The land has also assaulted the structures of Warsaw. One particular parking lot continues to sink into the ground, now possessing a valley in the pavement large enough for a child to sled. Many buildings, including the massive Wal-Mart, begin to sink into the ground and require extra foundation, which still may not be enough to stop the lands transformation.

Warsaw has coexisted with its swampy origins since its founding, but I fear the town will never know when to quit attempting to test the land. I fear that one day the construction will go too far. The land can absorb only so much abuse. It may come one day, when the development and buildings finally go too far and put too much weight upon the soft ground, everything of Warsaw sinks into the earth, and the swamp will finally win.

Up in the Attic

Jessica Lamping

Up in the attic
Where little boys hide
Their nightmares from everyone else
Lies a big secret
Which no one will tell
Even though most can suspect it
They play with their toys
They beat up each other
While mothers say “boys will be boys”
The mothers are clueless
They have no idea
They don’t realize what it does to them
The little boys forced to repress
Broken from boyhood
Lied to and scolded

They have no chance after that



Bright Lights and UV Rays

Amber Slagal

Curtains

 closing heavily,
 made of soft-to-the-touch velvet.

The pulley system must be broken.

They can't be kept open
 no matter how much thought is put into it.

They're the vertical closing kind, top to bottom—
 the curtains.

Horizontal ones were long since outdated
 for the big stage,
 not since fish walked around.

There's really no need
 to hide the stage
 except to keep out harsh UV
 and moisten the blue lights.

Maybe the cause for curtains is cosmetic.

The color has been changed
 a dozen times in the last
 two weeks.

Some people look forward to the final show
 when the curtains will never open again.

At that point they would have
 turned a tint of light and dark violet and
 sag a bit, wrinkling mostly at the corners.

The blue lights won't need moistening
 their life will be dead.

Hopefully the show will have spawned a spin-off on Broadway:

A young, beautiful, successful show
 with bright blue or green lights;
 kept behind a heavy curtain
 safe from UV—

Remembering my blue eyes.

Zombie

Michael Moore

Cruel is the pounding in my chest.
Why must it go bump bump?

I do not know love
Or
How to live.

Why is it going bump bump?
Is this God's sick joke?
A living zombie is what I am,
I
Walk with the living and trot
In their step.
By gypsy magic
I am a beating heart.

But

I am a body with no soul.

I
Step, step, step with
The beat of life
That I blend in

But

Unable to love
Unable to live,
Live, live like
A person.

I may as well be
Dead.

My Broken Picture Frame

Danielle Marshall

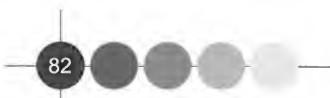
My broken picture frame
Cradled in my hands
With shattered glass
Embraced by charcoal wood
Crimson edges meeting together
Where his face would be
My ripped and torn photo
Beneath the glass
And stained sanguine
Breathes a memory
The blank slate of my past
Like fog slipping away
Escaping my tormented mind
Rewriting my own history
Lies becoming who I am
The warm liquid
Gushing from my hand to the floor
The only reminder to what happened
Clattering to the floor
I leave my broken memory
One the blood stained carpet
Of my former cage

Rising Elegance

Jessica O'Neal

Film (EOS Canon Rebel 2000 SLR w/ Tamron 28-105 lens)





Clear Night Sky

Sandra Blum

I stare at the sky
And choose a star.
And I contemplate how lonely
It must feel
So far from light and sound.

But I'm sure that
We alone believe the star
To be lonely.

To the star,
There probably
Isn't enough room
To shine.

Metaphorical Love

Holly Rene Herber

People say that love is found,
With a swan in waters smooth
Yet swans are filthy and rude,
So I guess that love is crude.

People say that love is chocolate,
It is sweet and creamy
Yet cream is full of guilt,
So I guess that love is sadly built.

People say that love is a heart,
It is close and true
Yet hearts are fragile and can break,
So I guess that love does take.

People say that love is a rose,
Through thorns the blossom fragrances
Yet roses wither when unkept,
So I guess that love is inept.

People say that love is red,
It is vibrant with passion
Yet red can fade, bleed and stain,
So I guess that love is pain.

People say that love is a diamond,
It is precious and strong
Yet diamonds are beautiful and rare,
So I guess that love is not fair.

Yet though love is not fair, it not deny the former,
For love is strong and unbreakable,
With such love it is thus rare,
For the few who hope, for the few who care.

Something To Tell You

Amber Mathia

I glimpsed a tattoo

On a girl's neck, under her hair

It was small and black, right there on her flesh

And ohmyGOD I wanted to call you

Right then to urge you NOT to get a tattoo on your neck

Because this girl was a flake, self-absorbed, a flaunter of name brand clothes

She is nothing like you, I wanted to ramble on about her having the audacity to do such a thing

A tattoo exactly where you wanted yours, yours was going to be an original

That you could easily hide from your parents of course

I was pumped up, ready to hit the send button on my cell phone, eager for some excited chatter

And then I remembered

You are dead.

Trying to Stay Alive

Christine Schmelter

He hugged himself tightly, trying to keep warm. It was the dead of winter and for some reason, he had the idea set in his head that Europe would be a lot warmer than his stateside home of Wisconsin during the month of December. He supposed that being stuck in a muddy and wet trench really didn't make the situation any better. He was soaking wet and freezing to the point that he was sure he could see icicles forming as he breathed out his wet breath. He swore under his breath as he spat out a huge wad of chewing tobacco; he wasn't going to be relieved from this personal hell until the morning.

Jack Able had joined the Army months before WWII had officially been declared. At first, he had been like all the other men his age, reading and willing to go off to fight for liberty and justice, but now all that he wanted to do was get a hot shower and a warm bed.

"Able! Hey, Able! You all clear over there?" a voice whispered over to him. Jack raised his head a little bit out of the trench and he looked around. He saw darkness and forest and the occasional spark from a shot being fired between the trees. He raised himself up a little bit more, and he looked down at the freshly fallen snow. A fresh wave of panic slowly overcame him. It had only been a matter of minutes since the snow had fallen, and Jack knew that no one but himself had been tromping around in the mess of it, but deeply inlaid in the snow were large boot prints.

Jack quickly dropped back into the trench, his rifle tightly clenched in his hands and shoved up against his chest as his breath came streaming out from his trembling lips, heavy and labored. They had all gotten into the trenches before the snow had started and as far as he had known, no one had stepped out of any of them. So where did the footprints come from?

He crawled over to where Tex was, buried deep into the far outreaches of the trench, and he plopped down beside him, still tightly clutching his rifle as he stared up at the winter night sky. Tex looked over at him, his helmet falling down over his eyes before he angrily ripped it off of his head.

"Tex, did anybody leave?" Jack asked him.

"Not that I know of. Why?"

"There's footprints around the trench," Jack hissed.

Tex looked at him, his clear blue eyes wide as fear slowly began to creep into them. He pulled himself halfway out of the trench so that he could get a better look at all that was around them and then he dropped back down beside Jack. He opened his mouth to speak, but a thick cloud of black, acidic smoke curled into the trench like a sweet aroma. It blacked out everything that could be seen. Jack quickly fumbled for the gas mask that was attached to his back, but then he stopped. It wasn't gas. Gas wasn't hot. It was fire! They were setting a fire in the trench.

"Fire! Fire! Get out!" he screamed, sucking down mouthfuls of smoke at the same time. He reached over and latched onto Tex. He grunted in frustration as he tried to lift the other man up; he knew that Tex was heavy, but it was almost as if he were trying to pick up two Texans. He finally looked down, seeing Tex's still form leaning half on Jack and half onto the wooden support. His mouth was wide open, and his eyes were

wide and staring. A huge chunk of shrapnel jutted out from his chest, and his face was ashen and bloody from the smoke. The smell of burning flesh and gunpowder stung Jacks nostrils as he dropped the body, watching in morbid fascination as it hit the ground with a thud. Jack grabbed his things in a rush as he ran from the trench towards the forest. He ran as fast as he could, not seeing anything that was in front of him until he was pinwheeling straight into another trench. He landed face first into the mud and muck, mud seeping into his nose, mouth, and ears, and he faintly heard the excited shouts as he pushed himself to his feet. He wiped the mud from his eyes, stopping as he saw the several guns pointed straight at his head. He looked down the muzzles of the ones that were aimed straight at him, and he looked past them to see the German soldiers that were holding onto them. His arms were roughly pinned behind his back, and a commanding officer came towards him, a grin on his face.

"Bringen ihn zee Buchenwald!" the man shouted. Jack didn't understand what he had just spoken, but he did understand Buchenwald.

Jack tried to pull himself free, but they pulled him up out of the trench, and they forced him to march to where a train was standing, waiting.

"Zve iz indef American!" the same man shouted. The side door of the train was thrown open, and Jack stared in horror at the sight before him. The rail car was stock full of men, women, and children of all ages. They all looked ragged and sickly and they stared at Jack with failing hope in their eyes.

So the stories were true; they really were taking Jews as prisoners, Jack thought to himself as he noticed the faded and dirty yellow stars sewn into their clothing.

Jack was pushed into the car and the door was pulled shut, plunging them all into darkness. Someone deep in the car let out a frightened scream, but was soon silenced. Jack wanted so badly to talk to them, to try to figure out what was going on, but he knew no one would understand him, and there really wasn't anything else to know about the situation that he was in. He was a prisoner of war, and he was getting sent to the death camp Buchenwald.

The door was thrown open again, and everyone piled out of the cars. The German soldiers had snarling and straining dogs at their sides, and they shouted "Links! Reichts!" as they pushed people onto the right or left side. Jack was shoved to the left and he stared up at the gates that were in front of them: the gates of a new hell.

Life Force

Michael Moore

Life leaving my wrists
Drip, drip it slowly says.

Red is the color of life.
Yet I am turning white

Change is near.
Nothing I do can save me now.

Black is the next color.
It covers me
Like a shroud.

What is this
I am becoming?

Nothing is what I am,
Enigma is my name.

Reality is surreal
Death is life.

I lay my head
Down on this
Fate.

Turning into space
Which I can not be replaced.



For Richard Braughtigan

Mark Seely

The eyes of a dog,
a sadness there, reflected—

twelve-seventeenths of a haiku

Wheel Thrown Tall Bowl

Ryan Preston

Bisqued and Pit Fired



The Walls We Build

Danielle Marshall

I won't lie
I'm no expert at seeing these walls
But I sure am better than you

I've kept my own walls up
All my life hiding from me
Denying what I was and what I could be
Always hoping that one day
My prince would come on a noble steed
To save me from me

Lately, I realized that if my prince came
He wouldn't be able to see through my wall
I had to save myself

Believe you me
I know when walls have been made
I know how they are built
But I don't always know the why
And I can't always see through them

I won't pretend
To know every way to tear down these walls
But I know what worked for me

I threw away my inhibitions
To stop caring what they may think
And to know what I felt was truer
I called my bluff
To speak out as an individual
And to let myself feel what I didn't think I could

All that's left are the ruins of a great wall
Leaving me for easy access
For my prince to find me soon

Believe you me
I know when walls have been made
I know how they are built
But I don't always know the why
And I can't always see through them

I won't hide
I'm through with wearing these masks
But I feel so comfortable

These masks like to lie
Saying that I'm too cold
Saying that my walls make me so unattainable
Pushing you away
Making you build up walls on top of walls

Throwing away these masks
Expose me to your critical eye
Tell me now...Am I for you?

Believe you me
I know when walls have been made
I know how they are built
But I don't always know the why
And I can't always tear them down

In The Moment

David Spencer

They were animals under the cotton canopy
He dug his claws into her back
Snorting and grunting as they moved as one
He felt her and she felt him

He took his time with her outer shell
Grooming slowly her skin with his fingertips
Slowing down, they took careless breaths
Their heart rates dropped
Their underwear dropped
She felt him and he felt her

She grasped his pelvis and sighed
And he shook like a man with arthritis
Intermittently and heavily he stroked her curves
He felt her and she felt him

Their lips were connected by a hunger
Starving for acceptance
Satiating lust
Whispers became unintelligible
As their hands explored the geography of each other's terrain
They breathed in the heat
And they exhaled their emotions
He caressed her cheek with the backs of his fingers
And he kissed her like he did for the first time
She felt him and he felt her

She let him
She wanted him
She felt him
Yet, she knew when the fire died down
He would be a stubborn piece of wood
Impenetrable and dull
She had him now

And he was giving all of himself
But with the final exhale, she rolled away
And was reminded of yesterday
When he yelled at her for her sensitivity
And that awful feeling in her stomach returned
And her hand on his chest rang false
He felt her and she felt nothing
And in the morning, she was gone



A Triune God

Mark Seely

Three aspects of a mirror's reflection:

1. the physical substrate, the mirror's surface,
2. the small corner of the world whose image is being reflected, and
3. the reflected image.

It is this third aspect that troubles me most. A conscious being, experience to reflect upon, and this—this what—that emerges out of nothing to make such demands.

Lies in the Shadow

Jessica Lamping

There are days when I feel
that I can't face the mirror
And my solid stone mask
is becoming clear

I want to step back,
and make the curtains close
To turn down the music
and stop all the shows

But you can't comprehend
the pain that I clothe
You don't understand
what lies in the shadow

LOSS

Courtney Hancock
Coiled Raku Sculpture



Manic

Michael Moore

Thoughts running through
My head.

Making me spin like
A top.
When will I stop?

My body is tired
But my mind says
No.

Sleep does not help
To release me.

It only feeds
This manic panic.

Incandescent lighting
Wakes me into a
Frenzy.

Weary or not this will bury.
This is scary.

And there is nothing
I can do.

An Unexpected Homecoming

Christine Schmelter

Tillie softly hummed the opening strands of several different Tool songs that she had strung together into one continuous song as she wandered down the hallways of her dorm. She had a six-pack of Pepsi and a huge bag of Guacamole Doritos tucked under her arms with a book open in front of her face. She had been planning on working until *The Daily Show* came on and she had five minutes to go. She had locked herself inside the library basement, forcing herself for most of the day to memorize the verb structures that she needed to know for her next History of the English Language exam. She was tired, and her head was crammed full of information, but she also felt a sense of pride and accomplishment; she remembered, and more importantly, understood, what she had just crammed into her head.

"I will find a center in you; I will chew it up and leave... I wanna watch it go right in, I wanna see the ground give way, ma please wash it all away," she softly sang, mixing her two favorite songs together. She rounded a corner, smiling and waving at all the people that she knew as she came up to her room. She stopped with a sudden halt two doors away from her room. A man was standing there, dressed in fatigues that proudly displayed achievements that the U.S. Air Force had given him. She inched towards her door, a pit of fear clenching her stomach; no, it couldn't be Dan, could it?

The man looked around, nervously and anxiously. He had yet to face Tillie, but she could clearly see the name that was stitched into his uniform: Crayner. Tillie froze and the man faced her, his anxiety dripping from his features as a warm smile replaced them, lighting his eyes up with excitement. It was him; the last person she ever thought hat she would see, Dan Crayner, was standing right before her, looking as fine as he did three years ago when he left her for Iraq.

"You miss me baby?" he asked her, that sexy confident voice snapping her back into the reality that was in front of her.

Tillie's stomach, jaw, and heart came crashing to her feet. "What? How? Why?" she stammered, forgetting all of the information that she had crammed into her head, forgetting about watching *The Daily Show*, forgetting her own name.

Dan laughed. "I missed you, too!" Tillie continued to stand there silent and with her mouth wide open. The six-pack dropped from the crook of her arm, slamming to the ground with a thud, sending out an explosion of Pepsi that promptly soaked her leg and the carpet. Tillie didn't even notice that she was there.

Dan's beautiful blue eyes squinted up as he looked at her with concern. "Tillie? Are you okay?" he asked. He reached down and picked up the six-pack, and he tossed it inside of the garbage can that was next to him. "You're soaking wet!"

Tillie looked down at her leg and the carpet, and she finally snapped out of the dazed state that she had thrown herself into. She could remember her name again.

"Oh yeah, I guess I am," she said in a slight wonder. "Do you want to come in?"

Dan smiled at her, but that concern never really left his eyes. "Only if you're sure you're okay," he said. Tillie nodded her head, and Dan went to take her arm. Tillie wrenched her arm free, and she led the way into

the room.

“Oh shit, oh shit, what are we going to do?” her mind frantically screamed this at the rest of her body as she threw the book and the bag of chips onto her desk. She glanced over at her TV, but *The Daily Show* was the last thing that she wanted to focus on right now.

“So, um, how have you been?” she asked him, keeping her back to him, as she nervously cleaned her desk, putting papers into stacks and CDs in their proper places.

“I would be a lot better if you would actually look at me instead of freaking out,” he said from behind her, his tone a mixture of hurt and annoyance.

You’re going to have to face this sooner or later, might as well do it now, she told herself. She took a deep breath and she turned and faced him. She refused to look him in the eye, deciding to slowly bring her eyes up to his. She started at his feet, staring into the perfectly polished black boots, looking at the frenetic appearance that had overtaken her at that moment. She brought herself up to his legs, remembering watching the way that his muscles twitched and moved whenever he ran, remembering the feel of those legs up against her own on the several mornings that they had woken up beside each other. She quickly brought her eyes up to his thighs and pelvis, quickly deciding to bring her eyes up farther; she didn’t want to think about that part of his anatomy. She remembered his lean and chiseled chest and stomach, remembering especially the intricate Celtic designs that were tattooed on his chest and all the times that she would just lay there in his arms, tracing out the designs. She slowly brought her gaze higher and higher, remembering the feel of his strong arms around her, the taste and feel of his full lips, remembering the way that his nose twitched when he laughed really hard, finally ending at those baby blue eyes that had made her fall in love with him all those years ago when she was just a dumb freshman in college, thinking that she owned the world, even though she had been terrified at being that far from home.

Dan’s eyes latched onto hers and they didn’t let go. She could see a difference in those eyes, secrets that she had never seen before. She just hoped that he couldn’t see the secrets in her eyes.

“When did you get back?” she asked him, starting to get herself under control. She was starting to calm down.

“A couple of days ago; I stole my dad’s car so that I could come and see you,” he said.

Tillie laughed. “Yeah, like your dad would ever let you take out the ‘66,” she replied dryly.

Dan shot her a challenging look and he dangled a set of keys in her face, the keys to the ‘66. Dan’s father owned a 1966 SS Convertible, a car that he had had since his fifteenth birthday. That car was his baby. No one went anywhere near it. It was a scared relic to Frank Crayner, the way that the Holy Grail was a sacred relic to the crusaders.

“How did he give you that? Did you really steal it?” she asked in total disbelief.

Dan shook his head. “Nope, he let me use it. He said, ‘the big shot pilot needed a decent car to see his girl in,’ he said proudly.

Tillie felt as if she was going to throw up. “Wow, congrats,” she said, wishing that she could shrink into the carpet so she could escape.



Dan had finally had enough. "Tillie, would it kill you to actually be excited to see me? I'm only home for a month and I just want to spend that month with you!" he exclaimed in frustration.

Tillie opened her mouth, but then she shut it again. She walked over to the door, trying to distance herself from him as she prepared herself for the words that she was going to say.

"Hey, babe," a voice said from behind her as a pair of arms came around her waist. Tillie's eyes grew huge and wide as she swore. Dan's eyes grew huge as he saw the kiss.

"Who the hell are you?" Dan demanded as the beloner of the voice and the arms stepped into the room. Brandon Reyes smiled smugly at Dan as he continued to hold onto Tillie.

"I'm her boyfriend," Brandon said. "Who the hell are you?"

"I'm the dumbass that left her behind!" Dan growled, grabbing up his things and hurrying out of the room. Tillie put her head in her hands as she stared down at the ground. Brandon watched Dan storm off with a smirk imprinted on his lips.

"What a loser," Brandon snorted.

Tillie jerked her head up and she glared harshly at him. She jerked herself out of his grasp and she slapped him hard. "He is not a loser, I am!" she snarled, turning on her heel, storming out of the room.

She ran down the hallway, ignoring the curious stares and calls of everyone, rushing out of the building, praying that Dan would still be down there. She slammed her way through the doorway, and she silently cheered when she found the '66 and Dan leaning up against it. He looked up at her, as if he knew that she would come running down to him.

"Dan, I am so sorry; I am so sorry that I didn't have the guts to tell you," she said, surprised by the tears that were coming to her eyes.

"Why did you do it? Was it to get back at me for going over there?" he asked.

Tillie took a deep breath. "At first, it might have been, but the more that I kept seeing him, it was because he was there and you weren't," she said, hating the words and herself.

Dan nodded; knowing that it would partly be his fault. "I don't know, Till. I've missed you so much; I think about you all the time. If you just would have broken up with me, or told me! Why didn't you? You've never had a problem with being brutally honest before in your life!" he said.

"I guess I changed," she said softly.

"Yeah, and it wasn't for the better," Dan said, his bitterness coming through. "Give me a call when you become the real you again." He threw open the car door, slamming it shut and peeling out of the parking lot as soon as the engine roared to life. Tillie wrapped her arms around herself as she sank to the ground, tears flowing like rivers down her cheeks, thinking about the disgrace that she had become.

In the Park II

Kristel Miller

Photography





Heart Murmur

David Spencer

I can't concentrate because of your skin
I feel naked without it
I can't inhale because of your eyes
I'm exhaling endlessly
I close my eyes and imagine you here
Your scent invades me
I touch your cheek and the small of your back
And our lips pull towards each other as if connected by a ripcord
Tied to the parachute of my heart

Your tender taste takes me in
Breathing passionately, pushing breathlessly
I feel naked without your naked body held by mine
I am incomplete without our legs intertwined
I clench my jaw so tightly when we embrace,
As if to hold all of my uncertainties inside
Then crush them under the weight of your acceptance

But

Then I open my eyes to this loveless world
And disappoint myself with expectations
I listlessly examine the blemishes in others
And wonder why they are not more like you
And I harbor no romanticism when I say
I wish everyone was you

I wish I could talk to your words all day
And face your face forever
When I am out in their world
I wish I could feel your feelings
And see your ocean in their eyes
I wish everyone was you
Because I have nothing to offer these unfamiliar features

However

Soon I will be at your side
Far away from eyes we'll hide
Two as one are you and me
Let us love and let us be



Bonded

Katherine Stembel

He had become a piece of me,
Bonded
By lifelines of blood and bridges of bone.

Losing him would be like losing a leg.

I would
Never
Truly regain my balance.

Harper

Lauren Moretti

Digital Photography



Just As Well

Sarah L. Kennedy

The tiles are cold against my bare feet
The first sting of hot water always hurts a fresh blister
The rug I sit on offers no relief from the hardness
Not as hard as the boss was on me today
The sucking of the drain breaks the silence
The cute guy and last night's chili made for an awkward elevator ride
My towel is still warm from the dryer
Such a luxurious comfy coziness
Like a much needed hug
Water drips from my butchered short hair
I used too much shampoo and conditioner again
My skin is still wet and smells of lilac
My favorite smell of spring
Condensation clouds the mirror
Just as well
I don't have to look to see that my mascara has run

In a World of Make Believe

Melissa Klahn

Lying to myself was the simple thing.
It was easy to plaster on a fake smile,
When others always seemed to be watching.
It was at those times, when I seemed to play make believe with myself.
Pretending for the sake of everyone,
That I was leading a normal life.
In reality it was never quite that simple.
Sometimes I just couldn't be perfect,
But then again who ever is?
I liked pretending
It brought back a sense of forgotten childhood.
Pretending made it easier to believe
That everything would be ok someday
Or at least everything would be back to normal with me.

A Lasting Memory

Christine Schmelter

The last time that Crete heard Screaming Jay Hawkins's "I Put a Spell on You," she was standing in the middle of a bedroom, slowly falling onto a bed. She couldn't believe that she was actually doing it, but it was an "it seemed like a good idea at the time" kind of thing, and it all just felt so right.

Crete had been working with Bran for the past two years and she had never really felt any attraction to him; sure, he was cute, but Crete knew way too much about him and his "habits" to want to date him. He was a whore; chasing after any girl that caught his eye, and as much as she liked him, she never wanted to be another one of his "conquests."

The last few nights, though, she had a recurring dream about him, a dream that showed the two of them together, and she wasn't sure how to feel about him as the dreams became more frequent. But as the night before he left finally came, Crete acted as if the dreams never happened and they went on as they usually did, talking about he bands that they both loved and telling each other nasty jokes. It was a pretty slow night, their hanging out never really interrupted. Towards the end of their shift, Bran reminded her that he would be leaving the next day and that he probably wouldn't be back until Christmas.

"Are you going to miss me?" he asked.

"Of course I'm going to miss you! This place is going to be so boring without you! I won't have anyone to cause any trouble with!" she told him as she shut down her station for the night, finally free from Wilco hell.

Bran laughed as he nodded his head. "Yeah, I'm going to miss you, too," he said.

Crete looked at him and she realized that something seemed different about him. She found herself being drawn to him. "You know, there is one way that we could remember each other," she said over her shoulder, dropping off her till. They both walked to the employee lounge, not saying a word to each other. Crete figured that he hadn't heard her comment, but the minute that they went into the lounge, Bran grabbed her and he kissed her. She was totally taken aback by the kiss; pushing past her first reaction that told her to beat the crap out of him, then getting more and more into the kiss the longer and deeper that it went. He broke the kiss off and grinned at her as they savored the kiss and taste of each other.

"I think your offer is a great idea," he told her.

They rushed out of the store, completely ignoring the goodbyes that were thrown at them as they ran. The two of them hurried off to Crete's car quickly getting inside. Bran kissed her making her giggle as she started up the car. "I Put a Spell on You" came blaring through her car stereo, causing both to jump at the sudden noise. Bran cracked up with laughter as he listened to the song while Crete drove to his house.

"Did you put a spell on me, Crete?" he asked with a laugh.

She raised an eyebrow at him. "Maybe I did," she said seductively. Bran laughed and then he held onto her hand as she pulled into his driveway. They shared a sloppy, rushed kiss as they got out of the car and stumbled up to his door. They ran into the house, and she was singing the song as Bran's hands went everywhere on her. They came into the bedroom and she stared at him as he pulled out a condom.

"Do you really want to do this?" he asked her, putting his arms around her waist. Crete looked into his

eyes and she considered what she was about to do. Crete was ready and she didn't want to wait anymore; she wouldn't be here if she had any doubts or apprehensions.

"Let's do this," she told him as she pulled off her shirt, the words of the song still running through her head.

"You know, the one thing that I couldn't tell you was how attracted to you I was," he told her as his kisses ran deeper, longer. She smiled up at him as she helped him out of his white Tool shirt and baggy jeans. The last time he had worn this, she had seen him with some giggling sleaze on his arm.

"Where do I stand? What do I become now that I'm becoming a Bran conquest?" she asked while their hands explored each other.

Bran gently smoothed Crete's blond hair from her face while he stared hard into her brown eyes. "None of them have ever existed. It's only been you baby," he said, easing her pants down her hips. Crete wrapped her arms around him, bringing his mouth down to her own, kissing him with every ounce of passion in her body. If someone had told her to make a wish, she would have wished for this night to never end.

They spent the rest of the night in near silence; the only sounds that were made were moans and grunts of passion along with an occasional gasp of air. When they finally passed out from the exhaustion of their long act, the scent of his sweat was all over her body and the smell of the jasmine oil that she sometimes used as a perfume was all over him. She woke up in a fog the next morning. She didn't know where she was, but as soon as she smelled him on her and the scent of lingering sex in the air, a grin came to her face. Bran put his arms around her, intertwining their bodies as he kissed her.

"Well, good morning to you too!" Crete said with a laugh. Bran just grinned at her.

Bran touched her face, toying with the strands of hair that were framing her face. All of Crete sang out as she had contact with him again. When she had first woken up, she had thought that last night had been just another one of her dreams. She was so happy to find it was real, but that fear was eating at her again.

"Still worried about where you stand?" he asked, seeing the worry cross her eyes. Crete nodded her head. Bran took both of Crete's hands and he stared deeply into her eyes. "I don't care about the other girls; you are the only one that I want."

Crete kissed him, entwining her fingers in his hair. "You're the only one that I want too," she said.

He left that night, after a long, teary, and heartfelt goodbye. They both swore that they'd e-mail, call, write, IM, and text message each other every chance they got while they counted down to the time when they could see, touch, and hold each other again. Watching his car drive away, she thought to herself; so this is what it's all about: an intense moment of passion brought together by one physical need and desire; inspired by one memorable goodbye.



Private Anyone

Carla Luzadder

The bus ride is long, it seems like an eternity.

He finally arrives at his destination.

The bus station is dirty. Bits of candy papers
Dance with the dust balls and cigarette butts.

The automatic doors swing open and

The latest batch of recruits proudly rushes in.

Excited and nervous, he looks around for the public phones.

The operator speaks in that familiar tone,

The one he's heard so many times before.

"For English, please stay on the line...."

He proceeds to enter his calling card number.

"Yes, Mom, we just got it in. This may be

The last call for a while. Say hello to Dad for me.

Yes, I'll call again as soon as I can, and

Yes, I'll write, just as soon as I can, I promise.

I love you too, both of you."

One more, long, boring ride, this time to the base.

In the distance he can see a very large enclosed area.

The cold looking metal gates divide the base

From the life and the world he used to know.

He sees an endless array of wood and brick barracks,
Very plain and sterile looking, and in need of fresh paint.

They are not quite what he expected. The brochures

Must have pictured a different military base.

The bed is much less substantial than his mattress at home.

Oh well, he can get used to it, it's for the good of his country

After all. Time to line up for uniforms and a hair cut.

"Wow, slow down there, buddy. Leave the ears intact!"

Well, he can always grow it back later, it's only hair.

It's up at dawn, hup to, hup to, march, march, march,

Maneuvers and rations, KP and latrine duty.

Days roll into weeks, weeks roll into months.
They say they may be shipped out next week.
Anticipation laced with dread fills the barracks.

The adrenalin is pumping through his veins
So hard that he can hardly catch his breath.

What did they say he was fighting for?

Oh yeah, his country, his right to be free.

He's had a lot of training, sure, but can he kill someone?

Someone's son, someone's brother, or father?

When it comes down to it, can he follow through?

Do unto others as you would have done unto you.

The golden rule doesn't seem to apply to war.

The Downside of Upright

Sarah Kitterman

Pencil



Mother's Eyes

Ami Tuft

I went to the mirror to see
And saw my mother's reflection looking back at me
I screamed
And saw all the hate for her
Directed back at me
Her anger spitting in my face
Her coldness in my eyes glaring back like daggers
All the truth I hid from her
Was aimed, painfully, towards me
I could no longer deny she was half of me
As I stared in my eyes,
Seeing who was really staring back at me



Ted

Teresa Helena Moreno

It wasn't a nightly thing, but on some nights, on the special occasions, Ted liked it when his girlfriend did his hair. He went into Maureen's closet and pulled out the curlers and put them on the bathroom counter. Maureen was in the shower getting ready for their night out. The bathroom was steamy from her hot shower, and when she got out, she couldn't see in front of her. Blindly, she reached for her towel. Drying off she made her way over to the sink and counter. There they were, her curlers, sitting on the counter warming up, waiting to be placed in Ted's hair. She had come to know the routine and knew what this meant.

"Let me get myself ready first, okay sweetie?"

Ted was already dressed in one of his favorite vintage button down shirts. Shades of yellow and white zig zagged through the shirt. On top of his shirt he wore a rainbow bib. The polychromatic colors looked like sun rays sprouting from his neck. For some reason he always put on bib when Maureen did his hair. She always assumed it was to cover his shirt from the hair-spray, but she never knew the real reason why.

Ted's hair was placed loosely in curlers and rested upon his head. As she gently put his hair up, Maureen softly brushed her breast against him. Ted's eyes moved up Maureen's body as the heat from the rollers mixed with the heat he felt inside. Maureen kissed him gently on his forehead when she was through. Walking into the kitchen she grabbed a glass to fix herself a drink. Mixing the gin and tonic with her finger, she sucked the remaining off her finger as Ted sat down on their brown couch.

Maureen looked at him above the rim of her glasses. Something was missing. Pressing her lips on the glass she took a sip. She couldn't contain it any longer. Setting her drink down, she walked into the bathroom and got out the tube. Making her way to the couch where Ted was sitting, she couldn't control herself any longer. Kneeling right in front of him, she pressed her body against his knees. "Hang on baby," she said "you're missing something." And with that she pulled out some mascara. Looking at her, Ted just smiled and obliged.

Meaningless Life

Katherine Stembel

Average employees shuffle endless, inconsequential paperwork.
Eight hours a day of pure, unadulterated nothingness.
Documented in triplicate.

Blackbird Visions

Mark Seely

Denial like a warm summer afternoon
when you are fifteen and the
world's greatest mystery had just been solved with
an unforeseen kiss.

Avoid the question like a politician.

To master the art of fractional vision,
to see your reflection through
polarized glass, to blink away any hint
of uncertainty, cover
fundamental doubt like a fresh coat of paint.

Remind yourself with a string carefully fixed
around your index finger
pointing, instructing the furniture movers,
hang your favorite picture
on the far wall where the void casts its shadow.

An old photograph like yellow caution tape—

A joke: a pun: it's not just a river in
Egypt, denial like a
river with crocodiles and biting flies that
transport blood donations in
prehistoric scaly green-skin shiny-winged sacks.

Death like an autumn afternoon of Edgar
Allen Poe blackbird visions,
but it's April, and her best friend tells you that
it's leukemia and all
you have left of her is a yearbook photo.

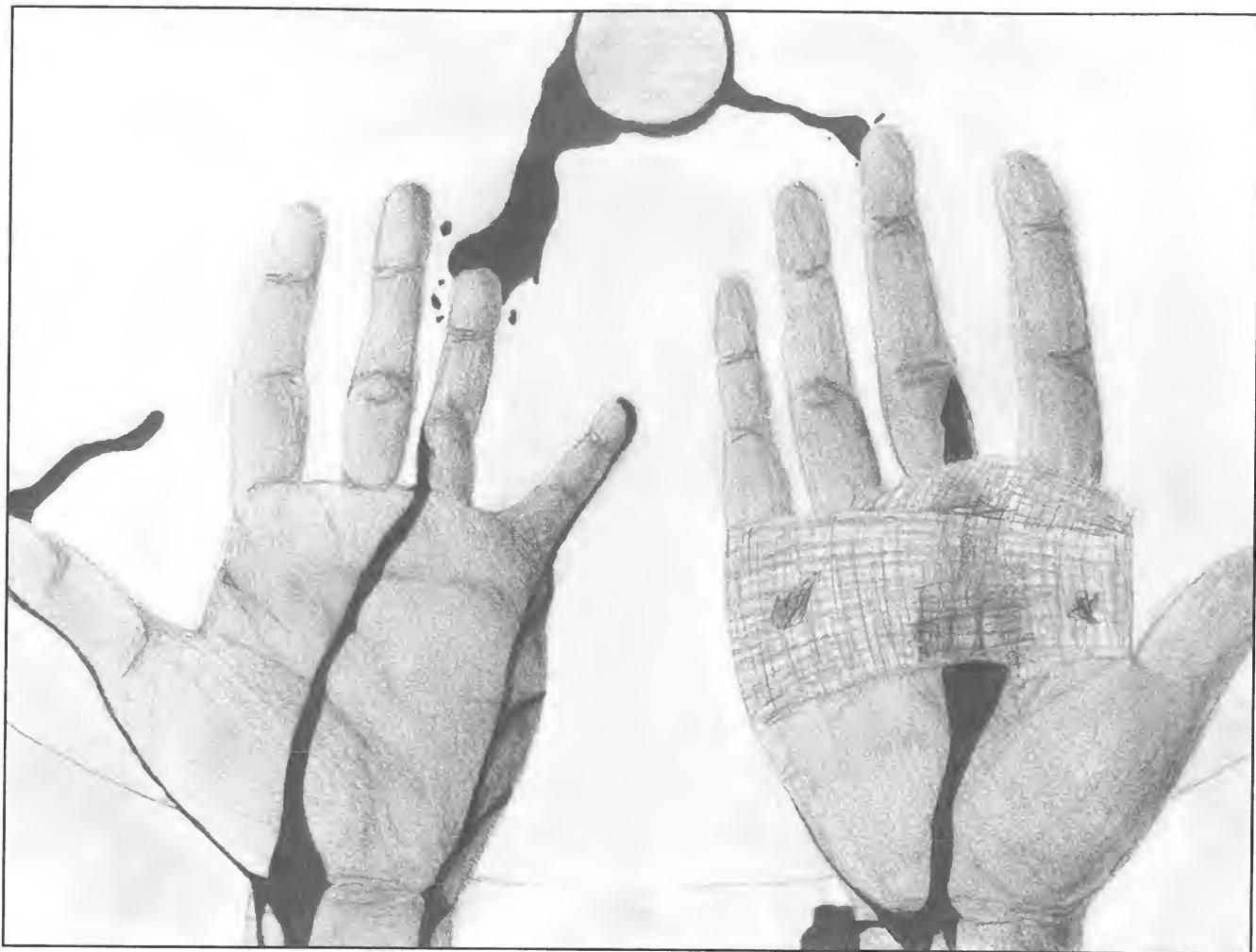
She tells you on a school bus where you have to
pretend that you don't want to
scream the question in her face until her skin
bleeds.



The Baumer

Sarah Kitterman

Pencil



The Huffin' and Puffin' Blues

Eileen Kerlin a.k.a. Little Leenie

I had me some trouble
Back in 2004.
Now one of my lungs
Ain't with me no more.

It had to come out,
The good doctor said,
But it could be worse,
Yeah, I could be dead.

Instead I'm adjustin'
To what now is my fate.
Most days are okay
With a 98 oxygen rate!

Some huffin'
Some puffin'
Some wheezin', it's true
I've got the "Sometimes I find it hard to breathe blues."

I walk up the stairs
Don't run anymore.
Say, "Just come on in"
To a knock on my door.
I still use the treadmill
So I don't get fat.
And if I feel good.
I'll bike after that.

Have fun fooling people
Who don't hear a sound,
When they try to listen
To a lung not around.

Some huffin'
Some puffin'
Some wheezin', it's true
I've got the "Sometimes I find it hard to breathe blues."

This leads me to now.
See what cancer brung?
Poor Little Leenie
With only one lung.

Hey, I think I'll make it
To a hundred and give
And smile everyday
That I am alive.

But please never ask
"What do I have to lose?"
You could end up like me
Little one lung Leenie singin' the blues.

Some huffin'
Some puffin'
Some wheezin', it's true
I've got the "Sometimes I find it hard to breathe blues."

Oh yeah...

